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A MIDSUMMER NIGHTS DREAM

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HIGH ST., NEW OXFORD ST., LONDON

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A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

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LONDON

UNIVERSITY TUTORIAL PRESS LD.

HIGH ST., NEW OXFORD ST.

Fourth Impression 1887

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY UNIVERSITY TUTORIAL PRESS LTD, FOXKIRK
NEAR CAMBRIDGE

LIFE AND WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE was born in 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, where his father, John Shakespeare, was trader and farmer, and at that time in prosperous circumstances. During the poet's boyhood John Shakespeare fell gradually into poverty; he parted with the land his wife—Mary Arden, a woman of good connections—brought him, was prosecuted for debt, and deprived of his alderman's gown. Of William Shakespeare between the time of his baptism and his marriage in his nineteenth year to Anne Hathaway (a woman some eight years his senior) we know almost nothing: it is conjectured that he received some little classical education at the Stratford Grammar School, and that he cast about to earn a living when his father's troubles thickened.

Between 1583 and 1585 three children were born to him, Susanna in 1583, and Hamnet and Judith (twins) in 1585. About this time he must have left Stratford to seek his fortune in London. A tradition, which is apparently ungrounded, connects his departure with a deerstealing adventure on Sir Thomas Lucy's estate at Charlecote, and Sir Thomas Lucy himself has been identified with Justice Shallow who came up to London to make a Star Chamber matter of a poaching affray. Shallow's coat of arms contained lucas, which also belonged to the Lucy coat; but the passage in which the coat of arms is described (*Merry Wives*) does not occur in the earliest editions and was probably inserted as a result of later quarrels. Shakespeare had many reasons for leaving Stratford,

notably his unhappiness in his home and his want of money, and it is quite as possible that the visit of the Queen's Players to Stratford in 1587 was the occasion of his leaving his native town.

We next hear of Shakespeare in 1592, when, as a young and successful actor and author, he aroused the jealousy of Greene, one of a group of university men who wrote for the stage. Greene calls him "an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his

'Tiger's heart wrapt in a player's hide'

supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shakescene in the country." The line which Greene applies to Shakespeare is a parody of

"O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide,"

applied by York to Queen Margaret in *Henry VI Part III.*, a play which Shakespeare is known to have edited, and Greene may have had a hand in writing.

The dedication in 1593 of his first published work, *Venus and Adonis*, shows that he had by that time become connected to some extent with a man of rank, for it is addressed to the Earl of Southampton, to whom also is dedicated *Lucrece* in the year following. Southampton, it may be added, is thought to have helped the poet materially and socially. About this time Shakespeare appears among the actors who played before the Queen, and a few years later he is able to spend a considerable sum upon the purchase of New Place, in Stratford, so that he seems, either as actor or author (or both), to have thriven in worldly matters: at the same time (1597) evidence of his popularity as a writer is furnished by the fact that his plays now begin to be printed. From that date until his death there are indications that his contemporaries looked upon him as their chief dramatist. He became a partner in the Globe Theatre in 1599, made further investments at Stratford, and retired thither about 1612. Four years later he died.

Shakespeare's activity as a dramatist extends over a period of twenty-four years, from 1588 to 1612. During that time his style steadily developed in the direction of greater freedom, so that it is possible by applying certain tests to classify his plays chronologically.

The tests most easily applied are metrical. Shakespeare in his early works frequently employed rhymed ten-syllable couplets, and also groups of four ten-syllabled lines which rhymed alternately. Even where he used blank verse there was apt to be a pause at the end of the line, and lines of eleven syllables, and lines of ten in which there was no stress on the tenth syllable (weak-ending lines) were not common. In his later work rhyme is rare, there are fewer and fewer end-stopped lines, and more in which the pause comes in the middle, eleven and twelve syllabled lines grow commoner, and light endings occur with increasing frequency. Lines ending with weak monosyllables, like *to* and *with*, do not occur before the latest period. Taken as a whole the style of the later periods is freer and sometimes harsher than that of the earlier. The first plays abound in fantastic word-plays and comparisons, and contain classical allusions, which are absent in the later plays.

Shakespeare's plays as a rule are grouped in four periods. The first period extends from 1588 to about 1595, and includes Histories, Comedies, and Tragedies, *e.g.* *Richard II.*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare began his career as a dramatist by editing and adapting for the stage old plays or plays which his manager bought outright from others, so that the extent of his authorship in many of the plays is uncertain. The style is not invariably the same, and some of the plays seem to have been of the nature of experiments, *e.g.* *Richard III.*, which in its simplicity and force, and in the strict subordination of all the characters to that of the hero, suggests the dramatic methods of Marlowe.

To the second period, which extends from 1595 to 1601, belong the greatest comedies and the historical plays in which Falstaff occurs. This period, as it includes no

tragedies and has in it all the best of Shakespeare's comedies, is usually styled the Comic Period. The verse is pure and flowing, the most musical that Shakespeare wrote.

The third period, from 1601 to 1608, includes the four great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*—the Roman plays, and some so-called comedies, which, however, are serious or cynical rather than comic. It is commonly called the Tragic Period. The verse style in the earlier plays—*Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*—is still that of the Comic Period, but in the later plays it becomes forcible and harsh as though the words were strained to convey more thought than they would bear.

The last or Romantic Period covers the four years from 1608 to 1612. To this belong the three romances, *Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and the *Tempest*, as well as the Shakespearean part of *Pericles*. The verse differs little from that of the late tragedies, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, which if metre were the only test would probably be included in the last group. The chief charm of the romances is poetic. They celebrate the beauty of unspoiled country life, whether in Miranda's island or among Perdita's sheepcotes, or in the wilds where Imogen meets her unknown brothers. As dramas they are loosely constructed and abound in curious anachronisms.

The following is a list of Shakespeare's plays classified roughly according to periods. Where the names are given in italics the Shakespearean authorship of a part of the play at least has been questioned.

FIRST PERIOD, 1588-1595

<i>Histories.</i>	<i>Comedies.</i>	<i>Tragedies.</i>
1 <i>Henry VI.</i>	Comedy of Errors.	<i>Titus Andronicus.</i>
2 <i>Henry VI.</i>	Love's Labour's Lost.	Romeo and Juliet.
3 <i>Henry VI.</i>	Two Gentlemen of	
Richard III.	Verona.	
Richard II	Midsummer Night's	
	Dream.	

SECOND PERIOD, 1595-1601.

<i>Histories.</i>	<i>Comedies</i>	<i>Tragedies</i>
King John	Merchant of Venice.	————
1 Henry IV.	<i>Taming of the Shrew.</i>	
2 Henry IV.	Much Ado.	
Henry V.	As You Like it.	
	Merry Wives.	
	Twelfth Night.	

THIRD PERIOD, 1601-1608

<i>Histories.</i>	<i>Comedies</i>	<i>Tragedies.</i>
————	All's Well. <i>As You Like it</i>	Julius Caesar.
	Troilus and Cressida.	Hamlet.
	Measure for Measure	Othello.
		King Lear.
		Macbeth.
		<i>Timon of Athens.</i>
		Antony & Cleopatra.
		Coriolanus

FOURTH PERIOD, 1608-1612.

<i>Histories.</i>	<i>Comedies.</i>	<i>Tragedies.</i>
Henry VIII	<i>Pericles.</i>	————
	Cymbeline.	
	Winter's Tale.	
	Tempest	

From a literary point of view it is most instructive to group Shakespeare's plays according to subjects, and this can be done if unnaturally hard lines are not drawn between the different periods. Thus *Twelfth Night* and *Julius Caesar* were probably written about the same year, but one looks back and the other forward.

Shakespeare's plays were first published in quarto editions, which began to appear in 1597. As there was no strict law of copyright, many of these editions were published without the author's consent or approval. A reporter would frequently take down the dialogue of the play at the theatre and deliver it as copy to a piratical bookseller. Sometimes, however, the editors would seem to have had access to acting editions. After Shakespeare's death a complete edition of his plays was published, in 1623,

by his friends Hemings and Condell, who had acted with him at the Globe. This, which is called the First Folio, was the first fully authorised edition of the plays, but as the Globe and all it contained had been burnt in 1613 the Folio text had to be based for the most part on that of the Quartos. The earliest Quartos as a rule give the best text, but require in places to be supplemented by the First Folio, and in many cases even emended. The most famous commentators on the text are Theobald (1733), Capell (1768), and Malone (1790). Besides the plays and the two poems mentioned above—*Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*—Shakespeare wrote 159 sonnets. These are not written like the sonnets of Petrarch or Milton in periods of eight and six lines, but each consists of three quatrains in which the lines rhyme alternately, followed by a rhymed couplet, *e.g.* abab | cdcd | efef | gg. Many of them, like the early plays, abound in fantastic conceits and elaborate metaphors. Technical words, especially the terms of law and medicine, are common in them, and the style is often obscure and artificial. In the power of passion and imagination they are nevertheless unsurpassed.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

INTRODUCTION.

The Text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is particularly good. There are two quarto editions. The first was printed for Thomas Fisher in 1600. This is known as Q1 or Fisher's Quarto. The second was printed by James Roberts in the same year, and is known as Q2 or Roberts' Quarto. In spite of printers' errors both Quartos are so good that it is evident that they were not pirated editions, but were set up from the author's manuscript. The Text of the Folio is evidently derived from a stage copy of Q2. The fact that the copy was used in the theatre is proved by the appearance of the name of Tawyer, who introduces the actors in the play. (See Notes, 'V. i. 125, p. 103.) Bottom also enters with the Asshead, i.e. the property Asshead belonging to the Globe Theatre. The Folio has a few corrections, which sometimes are not improvements.

Date.—Most modern editors are agreed that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written at the end of 1594 or the beginning of 1595. As it is mentioned in a book (*Merces Palladis Tamia*) which appeared in 1598, it cannot have been written after that date, but beyond that fact we know nothing from external evidence. The only important passage in the play itself which might be helpful in determining the date is Titania's description of the bad weather (II. i. 82-117). This description is not wholly in place in the scene and is of considerable length, so that it is difficult to see why it should be there unless there was an allusion to some bad season which everyone present would remember, and there is evidence to show that 1594 was one of the stormiest years ever known in

* References to this and other plays are to Acts, Scenes, and lines; thus V. i. 125 means Act V., Scene i., line 125.

England. Another passage which has been supposed to bear upon the date may be referred to. Among the list of plays to be presented at Theseus' wedding is "The thrice three Muses mourning for the death Of Learning, late deceased in beggary." This has been supposed to be an allusion to Robert Greene, the dramatist, who died in great penury in 1592. But Greene was no particular friend of Shakespeare (see p vi), and moreover an elegy is not a "satire keen and critical." There is a poem by Spenser, entitled "The Tears of the Muses," which laments the decay of Learning. It appeared in 1591. This poem was dedicated to the wife of Ferdinando Stanley Lord Strange, whose "servants" Shakespeare's company had been till his death, April 16th, 1594. Lady Strange was Spenser's cousin.

A good deal can be said in favour of the view that the play was written to be performed at a wedding. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has the character rather of a masque than a play written for the theatre, and no wedding festivity was complete without a masque. The occasion of the play is Theseus' wedding, and it concludes with an Epithalamium or Marriage Song. If this view holds, far the most likely wedding was that of William Stanley Earl of Derby, who on Jan. 26th, 1595, married Lady Elizabeth Vere, daughter of the Earl of Oxford. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp at the Court at Greenwich, so that Elizabeth was probably present—to hear the compliment paid her in II. i. 153: Shakespeare's company had served the bridegroom's brother Lord Strange.

The only interest which attaches to determining the date of a Shakespearean play depends on the fact that each play has its place in the development of Shakespeare's art. The evidence from metre is all in favour of an early date: the feminine endings are few, the rhymes are frequent, and end-stopped lines are the rule even in the blank verse. In fact the argument from metre only would probably be in favour of an earlier date. But *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presupposes most of the earlier comedies. It has a great deal in common with *Love's Labour's Lost*, which play contains also a comic

interlude by village actors, and much breaking of vows owing to the interference of love. The end of Act III. suggests a passage in *Love's Labour's Lost*—"Our wooing doth not end like an old play, Jack hath not Jill." In the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* we have, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a study of male fickleness and a conflict between love and friendship, and also a lady following her unfaithful lover. The opening of the *Comedy of Errors*, in which the Duke condemns Aegeon to death, suggests a parallel to Theseus' treatment of Hermia, and the complicated confusion of persons in that play much resembles the state of affairs seen in the enchanted wood. The *Dream* also presupposes *Romeo and Juliet*. Any casual student if asked to locate the line

"The course of true love never did run smooth"

would probably place it in *Romeo and Juliet*, while it is almost impossible not to feel that Lysander's words in I. i. 140-149 refer to the theme of the tragedy (see note on I. i. 147, p. 75).

Sources—The chief sources used by Shakespeare for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* were Chaucer's *Knights Tale* and Plutarch's "Life of Theseus" for Theseus and Hippolyta, and for Pyramus and Thisbe Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* translated by Golding.

The *Knights Tale*, from which the poet drew very little, opens thus.

"Whilom, as olde stories tellen us,
Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;
Of Athens he was lord and governour,
And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
That gretter was ther non under the sonne.
Ful many a riche contré hadde he wonne;
That with his wisdom and his chivalrie
He conquered al the regne of Femynye,*
That whilom was i-cleped Cithea;
And weddede the queen Ipolita,
And brought hire hoom with him in his contré,

* The kingdom of the Amazons. The name is formed from the Latin *femina*. In the next line *Citheia* = Scythia.

With moche glorie and gret solempnité,
 And eek hire yonge suster Emelye.
 And thus with victorie and with melodye
 Lete I this noble duk to Athenes ryde,
 And al his ost, in armes him biside
 And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
 I wolde han told you fully the manere,
 How wonnen was the regne of Femynye
 By Theseus, and by his chirvalrye,
 And of the grete bataille for the nones
 Bytwix Athenes and the Amazones;
 And how asgid* was Ypolita,
 The faire hardy quyen of Citha;
 And of the feste that was at hire weddyng,
 And of the . . . t at hire hoom comynge;
 But al that . . . most as now forbere."

Halliwell suggests that the following passage from the *Knight's Tale* may have furnished Shakespeare with the idea of introducing an interlude into the play:

"ne how the Grekes pleye
 The wake-pleyes, & kepe I nat to seye;
 Who wraistloeth best naked, with oyle enoynt,
 Ne who that bar him best in no disjoynt.
 I wole not telle eek how that they ben goon
 Home til Athenes whan the play is doon."

He also quotes lines 2702-2704:

"Duk Theseus, and al his companye,
 Is comen hom to Athenes his cité,
 With alle blys and gret solempnité,"

which he believes to bear more than an accidental resemblance to what Theseus says, IV. i. 181, 182:

"Away with us to Athens: three and three,
 We'll hold a feast in great solemnity."

In the *Legende of Thisbe of Babylon* (lines 756, 757) Chaucer writes

"Thus wolde they seyn: Alas, thou wikked walle!
 Thurgh thyne envye thou us lettest alle;"

which Halliwell compares with Pyramus's address to Wall, V. i. 181:

"O wikked wall, through whom I see no bliss."

* Besieged.

† Wake-plays, or funeral games.

The "Life of Theseus" in North's *Plutarch* has also been mentioned as one of the sources from which Shakespeare drew some small part of his material. The only passages that can be cited as illustrating the play are the following:—

"And so going on further, in the straits of Peloponnesus he killed another [robber], called Sinnis, surnamed Pityocamtes, that is to say, a wreather or bower of pine-apple trees whom he put to death in that self cruel manner that Sinnis had slain many other travellers before . . . This Sinnis had a goodly fair daughter called Perigouna, which fled away when she saw her father slain, whom he followed and sought all about. But she had hidden herself in a grove full of certain kinds of wild pricking rushes called *stæbe*, and wild sperage, which she simply like a child intreated to hide her, as if they had heard, and had sense to understand her: promising them with an oath, that if they saved her from being found, she would never cut them down, nor burn them. But Theseus finding her, called her, and sware by his faith he would use her gently, and do her no hurt, nor displeasure at all. Upon which promise she came out of the bush. . . .

"Furthermore, after he was arrived in Creta, he slew there the Minotaur (as the most part of ancient authors do write) by the means and help of Ariadne who being fallen in fancy with him, did give him a clue of thread, by the help whereof she taught him, how he might easily wind out of the turnings and crancks of the labyrinth. . . . They report many other things also touching this matter, and specially of Ariadne: but there is no troth nor certainty in it. For some say, that Ariadne hung herself for sorrow, when she saw that Theseus had cast her off. Others write, that she was transported by mariners into the ile of Naxos, where she was married unto Oenarus the priest of Bacchus: and they think that Theseus left her, because he was in love with another, as by these verses should appear:

Aegles, the nymph, was loved of Theseus,
Who was the daughter of Panopeus. . . .

“Touching the voyage he made by the sea Major, Philochorus, and some other hold opinion, that he went thither with Hercules against the Amazons: and that to honour his valiantness, Hercules gave him Antiopa the Amazon. But the more part of the other historiographers, namely, Hellanicus, Pherecides, and Herodotus, do write, that Theseus went thither alone, after Hercules’ voyage, and that he took this Amazon prisoner which is likeliest to be true. For we do not find that any other, who went this journey with him, had taken any Amazon prisoner beside himself. Bion also the historiographer, this notwithstanding, saith, that he brought her away by deceit and stealth. For the Amazons (saith he), naturally loving men, did not fly at all when they saw them land in their country, but sent them presents, and that Theseus enticed her to come into his ship, who brought him a present: and so soon as she was aboard, he hoised his sail, and so carried her away.

“Now, whether they [the Amazons] came by land from so far a country, or that they passed over an arm of the sea, which is called Bosphorus Cimmericus, being frozen as Hellanicus saith: it is hardly to be credited. But that they camped within the precinct of the very city itself, the names of the places which continue yet to this present day do witness it, and the graves also of the women which died there. But so it is, that both armies lay a great time one in the face of the other, ere they came to battle. Howbeit at the length Theseus, having first made sacrifice unto Fear the goddess, according to the counsel of a prophecy he had received, he gave them battle in the month of August, on the same day in the which the Athenians do even at this present solemnise the feast which they call Boedromia. . . . Afterwards, at the end of four months, peace was taken between them by means of one of the women called Hippolyta. For this historiographer calleth the Amazon which Theseus married, Hippolyta, and not Antiopa.”

Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is the ultimate source of the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. As Shakespeare’s interlude is a parody of other plays, the language does not bear a close relation to Ovid. The passage in Golding’s translation

which is closest to Shakespeare is the description of the wall.—

The wall that parted house from house had riven therein a cranie,
Which shroonke at making of the wall this fault not markt of aunc
Of many hundred yeeeres before (what doth not love espie ?)
These lovers first of all found out, and made a way whereby
To talke together secretly, and through the same did go
Their loving whisprings very light and safely to and fro.
Now, as at one side *Pyramus*, and *Thisbe* on the tother,
Stood often drawing one of them the pleasant breath from other
O thou envious wall (they sayed), why letst thou lovers thus ;
What matter were it if that thou permitted both of us
In armes each other to embrace : or if thou think that this
Were over-much, yet mightest thou at least make roome to kisse.
And yet thou shalt not finde us churles : we thinke our selves in det,
For the same piece of curtesie, in vouching safe to let
Our sayings to our friendly eares thus freely come and go.
Thus having where they stood in vaine complained of their wo,
When night drew neare they bad adue, and ech gave kisses sweete,
Unto the parget on their side the which did never meete.

Ninus' tomb and the mulberry tree are referred to in the following lines :—

They did agree at Ninus Tombe to meet without the towne,
And tary underneath a tree that by the same did grow :
Which was a faire high mulberie with fruite as white as snow.

Some Characteristics of the Play.—*A Midsummer Night's Dream* has several interesting features as a play. The story being drawn ultimately from classical sources, the drama affords a good example of how the Renaissance writers treated classical subjects. There is no attempt to reproduce the classical spirit, the shape and ideas of the drama are entirely romantic. English and mediaeval life and manners are simply translated into classical terms. The clowns are purely English peasants of Shakespeare's own time, the lovers are the ordinary heroes and heroines of romance slightly coloured by Shakespeare's imagination. The fairies are so much the conceptions of the romantic imagination that it escapes the reader's notice that Titania is simply a title of the classical Diana. The classical setting enabled Shakespeare to idealise, but what he idealised was his own world. The play therefore abounds

in so-called anachronisms, in fact the whole action is an anachronism from first to last. Theseus and Hippolyta celebrate May morning; Bottom and Quince make jokes at the expense of the French; Hermia is to retire into a cloister, and Helena sees and loves Demetrius in church. It was certainly not in classical Athens that Hermia and Helena sat and worked at one sampler, nor in an Attic village that Titania saw the nine men's morrice filled up with mud, or the mazes on the green indistinguishable for lack of tread. Nor were wild geese or jackdaws pursued with firearms in the days of Theseus, and Queen Elizabeth was still in the future. Puck and all his doings are quite foreign to the ancient world. Such anachronisms are not blemishes: they are what give the play its character as a work of art.

Secondly, the play has many of the characteristics of a masque. It constitutes an appeal to the imagination and the senses rather than to the intellect, and this Shakespeare is at pains to state. It has a single theme, "love," and a single occasion to serve as a framework for the action in Theseus' wedding, but it falls into three divisions—the waking section, of the main action of which the chief figure is Theseus; the Dream, which is controlled by the Fairies; and the comic interlude, or anti-masque, conducted by Bottom and the clowns. So distinct are sleeping and waking worlds that no critical ingenuity can reconcile them. Theseus says at the start that there are still four days before his wedding on the first of May, and that the moon is waning. One day we can account for, but Hippolyta's words, "Four nights will quickly dream away the time," prove more than true, for three nights are not to be distinguished from one, and in the wood there is moonlight in plenty, and the season is apparently midsummer, for thyme and honeysuckle and wild roses do not bloom in May, nor are dewberries to be found in the woods in the early spring. Moreover, the middle summer's spring (*i.e.* beginning) is past. It seems as if Shakespeare had deliberately chosen midsummer for the dream and May for the awakening, spring time being suited to love and midsummer to the enchantments of the fairies.

Finally, there are four distinct groups of characters—Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus, who never enter the Dream; the Lovers; the Fairies; and the Clowns

Theseus is Shakespeare's first picture of a hero. He is a man in middle life, who has left the more violent passions of youth behind him (II. i 76). His love for Hippolyta is not an infatuation. it is dignified, courteous, and gallant rather than passionate. Though he wearies for the day of marriage (I i. 1) and his first thought is always to provide for her pleasure, he is capable of transacting the ordinary business of his kingdom. His treatment of Hermia in the first act conforms to the Roman ideal of courtesy in manner and firmness in principle. When he overbears Egeus in the matter of his daughter's marriage (IV. i. 176), his decision is final and unquestioned. He has also the two chief graces of power—modesty (V. i. 47), and tolerance for the weakness of others (V. i. 81, 91, 350). His is the giant's strength, yet he knows that it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.

From the point of view of the play the most important feature of Theseus' character is his belief in facts, his admiration for what is positive and real, and his contempt—which is not the less contempt because it is never ill-mannered—for the things of the imagination. His presence on the scene is as typical of a real world as Titania's is of a dream world. In some respects Theseus resembles Henry V, but the latter is younger and even as a king more boisterous; and, having more imagination in certain directions, when stern he is apt to be cruel. Henry's bluff wooing of Katherine is quite different from Theseus' chivalrous deference to Hippolyta.

The Lovers—It is in the case of the Lovers that the appeal to the senses of the spectator rather than to the intellect of the reader is most evident. Their movements suggest a complicated quadrille for four performers, in which the changes of partners are effected by means of the love-juice. In the first figure (Act I) Lysander and Demetrius both follow Hermia, and Helena Demetrius. In the second

(II. ii., and III. ii) Lysander pursues Helena, and Demetrius Hermia. In the third, which is the reverse of the first, Demetrius and Lysander both follow Helena, and Hermia Lysander (III. ii, end). Then there is a transitional figure—a quarrel for ladies and gentlemen—leading up to the happy conclusion, which reverses the second figure (Act IV.) The host is Oberon and his master of the ceremonies Puck, whose function is to lead mortals through dances.

Almost all Shakespeare's early comedies treat of love, and in all it is regarded as an infatuation strong enough to break the bonds of friendship and duty, and yet in men often as short-lived as it is violent. Hermia is rightly convinced that men have broken more vows than women ever spoke, and Puck that if he has been guilty of making one true lover false, it is only one case in a million, and that in all the others lovers prove false without his aid. Lysander may be trusted perhaps, but Demetrius is without excuse. The love-juice is merely a concrete symbol of masculine inconstancy. The unreasonableness of love is brought out with equal clearness. Love depends only on the eyes, and even they are blinded by imagination, so that Cupid is rightly painted blind, for a lover will see "Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt." The same truth is expressed with delightful irony when Lysander, being bewitched, submits himself wholly to the guidance of mature reason, and when Bottom, as the fairy queen declares her passion, remarks that love and reason cannot live together, to which she replies "Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful."

As the doings of the Lovers are controlled partly by the Fairies, partly by the most unreasonable of all passions, it is not surprising that the four are hardly characterised. There is very little to distinguish Lysander from Demetrius: the former possibly has a shade more sentiment, and the latter, like Hermia, a touch of bad temper. Demetrius also develops a habit of making puns in the last act, and is more critical and less sympathetic than Lysander. Helena and Hermia are only contrasted types such as may be found in Shakespeare's early plays or in any comedy of manners, not individualised women like Portia or Beatrice.

But the types are clearly conceived and the difference effectively brought out by contrast. *Hermia* is short and dark, and when at her best courageous and dignified, as she appears before *Theseus*. When the Dream removes moral restraints, she becomes vixenish and bitter with her tongue (II. ii. 60; III. ii. 298). In love she is arch, almost coquettish, and keeps *Lysander* well in hand and shows her passion for him by actions or in soliloquies. Her pursuit of *Lysander* and her determination to save him from *Demetrius* are quite different from *Helena's* "fond chase" of her lover. *Helena*, on the other hand, is tall, fair, and timid, and by no means mistress of herself. Her love is of the clinging sort, that no repulses can quell (II. i. 20). It overrides her principles (I i. 246), her modesty (II i. 217). Her passion finds expression in words at all times and in all places. She is full of self-depreciation (II. ii. 94) and longs for sympathy.

It is not allowable after the blessing bestowed by the fairies to enquire how the two marriages turned out; but it is to be hoped that *Lysander* remained master of his own house, and that *Demetrius* with so sweet and yielding a wife did not grow selfish or weary, or that if he did *Puck* was at hand to administer the love-juice again.

The Fairies.—Shakespeare's fairy world is a complex conception in which the poet's imagination has fused together elements drawn from different sources, in part literary and part popular. The original fays of Romance were enchantresses, such as are found in the legends of King Arthur. *Vivien* who was identified with the Lady of the Lake is one, and Keats' *Belle Dame sans Merci* another. They knew the secrets of nature and wielded miraculous powers over men. But there was a distinct class of Nature spirits of more popular origin called elves (in Scandinavian *trolls*, *kobolds*, *alfs*, in German *Nixen* or *Elfen*, *Erlen*); they are found in the mythology of all Aryan nations, more particularly among the Celts of Ireland, Brittany, and Scotland. They were as a rule small or dwarfish, often deformed. The function of one special class—the German *gnomes*—was to guard hidden treasure, and a spirit of this

kind called Alberich or Elfeurich (from *Alf*, fairy, and *rich*, king) appears in an old German epic called the *Nibelungenlied*. These spirits, Alberich among them, were introduced into the French romances, and blended with the fays or enchantresses to form a world of *fayerie*, or fairy. Alberich in France became Alberon or Auberon, and under that name he figures in a French prose romance which celebrates the doings of Huon of Bordeaux, one of Charlemagne's knights. This romance was translated into English by Lord Berners about 1540, and Auberon in the translation appears as Oberon.

Classical mythology was not without its influence on the fairy world. Christianity, though it dethroned the classical gods and goddesses, did not overcome the popular belief in Nature spirits and demons. The result was that the dethroned deities became identified with the fairies. Thus in Chaucer Pluto and Proserpine are king and queen of fairy-land. Later Diana replaced Proserpine, and competed successfully for the throne with the Celtic Mab and a romance queen by name Aureola. Oberon at the same time replaced Pluto. Diana had three forms—Luna in heaven, Diana the huntress on earth, and Hecate in hell. As Hecate she was already patroness of witches, and her connection with the moon and the woods made it easy to identify her with the fairy queen. Moonlight and woodland are important throughout the Dream. The name Titania (born of the Titans or older Greek gods) is an epithet of Diana which is found in Ovid. The fairy court or kingdom was placed by the author of Huon of Bordeaux in the Far East, and Shakespeare follows him in making Oberon and Titania come independently of each other from India.

Shakespeare conceives of the fairies as tiny in size, but not deformed; they creep into acorn-cups (II. i. 31), and the snake's slough (II. i. 253) or the bat's wings (II. ii. 4) suffice them for clothes; they move swiftly, following the moon (II. i. 7, 172; II. ii. 2; III. ii. 103; IV. i. 93); they know, like the fays, the secrets of Nature, but are true elves in being Nature spirits, aiding in all the unexplained processes of the natural world (II. ii. 3);

they fall in love with mortals like the enchantresses of romance, and carry off mortal children, leaving elves to replace them; they dance in rings at midsummer, and disport themselves at night. It is noticeable that Oberon protests strongly against being identified with any form of ghost or demon (III. ii. 388). Shakespeare, as in *The Tempest*, keeps his fairies pure Nature spirits, and dislikes all traditions which would bring them into relation with the spirits of the dead. As characters in the play Oberon and Titania have different parts. Oberon is "king of shadows"; he acts, but is almost as invisible to the reader as he is to other mortals. Titania, who is passive, is painted in the vividest colours of Shakespeare's imagination.

Puck, or, to give him his proper name, Robin Goodfellow, belongs almost entirely to folklore. He is responsible for all that is unexplained in household affairs; and as there is usually an explanation for the things that go right, he is mischievous, stealing cream, stopping the butter from breaking and the beer from fermenting, frightening the maidens of the village, playing tricks of all kinds upon mortals (II. i. 32-57), and rejoicing most in things that fall out preposterously (III. ii. 115, 120). He has the gift of transformation, and can change himself into a horse, a goat, a three-legged stool, a crab-apple, or a fire (II. i. 96, 32-57). He is also the spirit of the marsh fires which mislead travellers (III. ii. 386). Upon occasion he will help in domestic labours and reward tidiness. He alone of the fairies apparently retains his native Teutonic ugliness.

Robin Goodfellow was a well-known spirit, and Scot (1584), an authority on witchcraft, complains that when the common people ceased to believe in him they looked for the explanations of misfortune in witchcraft. The name Robin Goodfellow (like the Scotch "good people" for fairies) is probably intended to propitiate the goblin. Puck is, strictly speaking, not a proper name, but means "sprite." Though it is only used of Robin Goodfellow, the article is prefixed in the epilogue, and in the other passage where it occurs Puck is rather a title than a name.

Shakespeare makes Puck Oberon's servant and jester, and so gives him a place in the Fairy Court.

The incident of the love-juice seems to have been derived from a Spanish romance called *Diana Enamorada*, which was written in the first half of the sixteenth century. The translation was not published till 1598, but had been written earlier, and Shakespeare used it for the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The title, if we remember that Titania is Diana, suggests a reference to this play. In the romance the charm is used, as in Shakespeare, to transfer love. The use of the pansy as a charm seems to have been Shakespeare's own idea. (See note on II. i. 164, p. 84.)

The Clowns are drawn not from literature, but direct from life; they have no prototypes, unless it be in Shakespeare's own works, and are more individual than their predecessors in *Love's Labour's Lost*.

Bottom is their king and rules by divine right, and also by merit. He is the man of action, cast by Nature for the part of tyrant (II. ii. 22), though his versatility enables him to succeed even with the lover. All the others look up to him, and he orders them about like a benevolent despot (I. ii. 94; IV. ii. 30); and when he returns from the wood the mere presence of their commander inspires them with new hope and courage. Anything to which he puts his hand will succeed and he will return from Theseus' palace, as Theseus himself returned from Thebes, a conqueror.

Bottom's inordinate conceit and self-importance, and also his good humour, are perfectly natural to him. He is monarch of all the world that his limited intelligence can survey; he has no imagination to see further, no humour to whisper in his ear that the world which he bestrides like a colossus is ridiculously small. Thus he is able to contradict the Duke himself without misgiving (V. i. 181), and to take the love of the fairy queen entirely for granted. It is because he is wholly without imagination and modesty that the poet suddenly transports him to fairy-land and bestows upon him the love of

Titania, who is compact of the very quality he lacks. There is hardly, even in Shakespeare, so delightful a contrast—the flowers, the moonlight, the nodding elves, the fairy queen whose every word creates a new picture of woodland beauty, and Bottom gleeing after his fashion, delighting in the music of the tongs and bones, and crying out for the provender that best suits the stomach of an ass. Nor is the contrast without an ironical significance, for a history of literature would show that the choicest pearls of imagination are often cast before swine.

The other clowns are the foils of their chief. Quince is interesting as the poet of the play. Shakespeare's own case affords a proof that it was possible for a man who had had no particular education to write for the stage. The play, however, is rather a parody of older bombastic writers than an attempt to copy the manner of a rustic poet. But the poet, in spite of his gifts, is nervous and retiring, and fails through fright to render successfully the prologue he has written. He naturally admires the successful Bottom, and Bottom realises that Quince is a poet admirably suited to write plays for him to act, and ballads to celebrate his achievements. Shakespeare we know did not take the chief parts at the Globe.

Of the other clowns Snout and Starveling are the most interesting. The former is Bottom's understudy, he develops Bottom's ideas, and even makes suggestions on the same lines, but without a lead he is helpless. Starveling, like all Shakespeare's tailors, is drawn as particularly feeble: his are always counsels of pusillanimity, and in the play he evidently loses his head and forgets his part, taking an early opportunity to get off. He alone is worried by the audience, and it requires some encouragement from Lysander to make him say anything.

Metre.—In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare uses both verse and prose. The verse belongs to two types, (a) the iambic, where the normal stress is on the even-numbered syllables and the foot (or group of two syllables) is accented on the second, and (b) the trochaic, where the normal stress is on the odd-numbered syllables.

The commonest type of line is the ten-syllabled iambic. Other iambic lines are used in the comic interlude. Trochaic metres—generally rhymed sevens—are given to the fairies and prose is reserved to the clowns.

Ten-syllabled iambic lines, sometimes called heroics, may be written with or without rhyme, and if they are rhymed they may rhyme in couplets or alternately. Unrhymed heroics are called blank verse, rhyming pairs of ten-syllabled lines heroic couplets, and groups of four lines rhyming alternately quatrains.

A normal heroic line, whether blank or rhymed, consists of ten syllables, of which the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth are stressed.

If Hér | mia méant | to sáy | Lysán | der liéd. |

With hálf | that wísh | the wí | sher's éyes | be préssed

If, however, every line conformed to one type, the metre would be insufferably monotonous. There are, therefore, certain recognised variations both in the number and position of the stresses and in the number of the syllables.

In the first place, a line need not have five stresses, but may have only four or even three.

And to | that pláce | the shárp | Athé | nian láw

More túne | able | than lárk | to shé | pherd's éar.

Your bú | skin'd mí | stress, and | your wár | rior love.

Becómes | a vír | t(u)ous há | eh(e)lor and | a maíd.

How cánst | thou thús | for sháme | Títá | nia?

If I | have thánks | it is | a déar | expénse.

In Créte | in Spár | ta nor | in 'Thés | saly.

It may be observed (*a*) that if there is no stress in the third foot the line breaks into two divisions, which as a rule are contrasted; (*b*) that if the whole number of stresses in a line is small, the words on which the actual stresses fall are emphasised, *e.g.* *thanks* and *dear* in the sixth example above.

Secondly, when the stress falls on an odd-numbered syllable the following syllable may either lose or retain its natural stress. In the first case the stress is said to be inverted, in the second the foot (*i.e.* the pair of syllables) has a double stress, and is sometimes called *spondaic*.

Cóme, my | Hippó | lyta, | what chéer, | my lóve
 As wíld | geése that | the créé | ping fów | ler éye.
 And, gén | tlə Púck, | táke this | transfór | med scálp.
 O héll | to chóose, | lóve by | anó | ther's éyes
 Mét we | on híll | or dále, | fórest | or gróve.
 Táke thou | sóme of | it and | séek through | this gróve
 Lóve looks | nó't with | the éyes | but with | the mínd.
 Befóre | mílk whíte, | now púr | ple with | lóve's wóund.
 Chánting | fáint hýmns | to the | cóld, frúit | less móon.
 Só will | Í grów, | só líve, | sú díe, | my lórd.

The effect of the inverted stress is (*a*) to freshen the metre at the beginning of a line, or after a pause; (*b*) to emphasise particular words, *e.g.* *love* in the fourth example; (*c*) extra stresses have the same effect, *e.g.* in the ninth example, where *faint* and *cold* stand out; (*d*) heavy lines with many stresses give an effect of slow and deliberate movement: the last example expresses the finality of *Herma's* decision; (*e*) in the sixth example the line is almost trochaic, the rhythm being adapted to the motion suggested by the line, but *thou* and *of* have probably some stress.

Thirdly, lines may have either more or less than ten syllables.

Many lines have an extra unaccented syllable at the end; these are said to have a feminine ending.

The pó | et's éye | in a | fíne frón | zy ról | ing.
 The lú | natic, | the ló | ver, and | the pó | et.
 Is as | in móck | 'ry sét, | the spríng, | the súm | mer.

The extra syllable sometimes occurs before a pause in the middle of a line; this is very rare in the early plays

That is | the máid | (man); the ló | ver áll | as trán | tie

Nót for | thy fáí | ry kíng | (dom), fáiries | away |

Proper names are frequently reckoned as only one syllable.

Bé not | afraid, | she shall | not húrť | thee, Hé | lena

A góod | persúa | sion, thére | fore hear | me, Hér | ma

Unstressed syllables in polysyllabic words are often omitted in the metre, both where they would be elided in ordinary speech and where they would not.

Lóng wíth | (e)ring out | a yóung | man's ré | venúe.

And his | lóve Thís | be vé | ry tráge) | eal mírth.

Becómes | a vír | t(u)ous bá | ch'(e)lor and | a máid.

Where the same word occurs twice in the same line it frequently suffers elision in one case and not in the other. If it is more emphatic the first time it counts for more syllables and for fewer the second, and *vice versa*.

And with | her pers | (o)nage, her | táll pers | onage.

Either and *whether*, as well as *even*, *over*, *ever*, are reckoned as monosyllables.

Whether if | you yíeld | not to | your fá | ther's choíce.

Either I | mistáke | your shápe | and bea | ring quáte.

And *even* | for thát | do Í | love yóu | the móre.

Present participles of two syllables are counted as one,

So Í | beíng yóung, | as yét | rípe not | to reá | son.

Unemphatic words are often run together.

Be it só | she wíll | not hére | before | your gráce.

And with | Demé | tr(i)us thóught | to have spóke | thereóf.

Thérefore | be out | of hópe | of qués | tion of dóubt.

Her bró | ther's nóon | tíde with the | Antí | podés.

le at the end of a word is not counted as a syllable.

Have with | our needl(e)s | créa | ted bóth | one flówer.

Uncóupl(e), | in the wést | ern vál | ley lét | them gó.

Prefixes are omitted, as the vulgar say *'cause* for *because*

This mán | hath (be)witch'd | the bó | som of | my chíld.

That I | have (a)nóin | ted an | Athén | (i)an's éyes

On the other hand, lines appear to have only nine syllables because a single syllable counts for two. An intrusive vowel may appear before *l* or *r* in an emphasised word.

O mé, | you júgg | [e]ller, | you cán | ker blós | som.

That is | hót íce | and wón | d[e]rous | stránge snów. |

Me[é]l | ted as | the snów | séems to | me nów

Exclamations or cries on which the speaker would pause often count for two syllables instead of one.

For pár | tíg us | — Ó | is áll | forgót.

Awáy, | you léth | íope. | — Nó, | no, sír.

But róm, | — fáí | ry, hére | comes Ó | beron.

— Ho, | ho, ho, | cóward, | why cómeest | thou not?

One or two syllables are sometimes lost in the middle of a line which is divided between two speakers.

Fairy. Art thóu | not hé? | | *Puck.* Thou speákst | aríght.

This is possibly the case in the second example in the preceding section.

Curtailed lines of two or more feet are frequent where there is action to fill the line or a change of subject, *e.g.* III. ii. 49 —

And kill | me too

Here *Hermia* breaks down, and her next words are addressed less to *Demetrius* than to herself.

The scansion of the following lines is disputed and they may be corrupt:—

(a) I know | a bank | where the wild | thyme blows |

—an iambic line with four feet. But some editors count the line full, and either reckon *where* as two syllables, or change to *whereon*

(b) Quite ó | vercán | opied | with lúse | ious | woodbine |

is reckoned as an Alexandrine or six-foot iambic, but some editors would contract *luscious* into one syllable, or even read *lush*.

(c) The squír | rel's hó | ard and | fétch thee | new nuts. |

But though words like *hoard* are often counted as two syllables, the rhythm is not good, and some editors prefer to make *new* two syllables, either assuming that an *e* belonging to the old plural survives in the metre, or that *Titania* pauses on the word to whet Bottom's appetite.—

The squír | rel's hoárd | and fétch | thee nów | [e] nuts.

Some insert *for* before *thee*.

(d) And what | póor dú | ty cán | not (do),—nóbl(e) | respect

Tákes it | in míght, | not mér | it.

But the metre is not satisfactory. Coleridge emended—

And what | póor dú | ty cán | not dó | yet would, |

Nóble | respect | tákes it | in míght, | not mé | rit.

Iambic metres occur in the comic interlude. These metres suggest the manner of some of Shakespeare's early comedies, *e.g.* the *Comedy of Errors*. The ten-syllabled lines are always rhymed in couplets, quatrains, and sextains. The stress in these lines is very regular, that they may sound stiff and monotonous. The laments of *Pyramus* and *Thisbe* fall into groups of six lines, of which the first and second, the fourth and fifth, and the third and sixth rhyme, the latter two having six syllables and the former four.

But stáy, | O spíte.

But márk, | poor knight,

What dreed | ful dóle | is hére.

Eýes, do | you sée,

How cán | it bé?

O dáin | ty dúck, | O déar.

In the early version of the play rehearsed in the wood the comic trimeter or twelve-syllabled line is used. These as a rule break in the middle after the sixth syllable.

Most rád | iant Pý | ramus, || most lí | ly-white | of húa, |

Of có | lour like | the réd | róse on | triúm | phant briár

Most brí | sky jú | venal || and éke | most lóve | ly Jéw,

As trúe | as trú | est hóse || that yét | would né | ver tíre

The fairies when engaged in enchantments as a rule use trochaic metres, generally (a) sevens rhymed in couplets and quatrains. Sometimes (b) the fourth syllable is omitted, and the line falls into two divisions, each of three syllables.

(a) Nów the | húngry | líon | róars

And the | wólf be | hówls the | móon,

Whílst the | heávy | plóughman | snóres

Áll with | weáry | tásk for | dóne.

(b) Tríp a | wáy, || máke no | stáy,

Hére she | cómes || cúrst and | sád

The stresses in these lines are varied as in the heroics. An extra syllable at the start turns the line into an iambic eight, and is sometimes used for variety.

To déw | her órbs | upon | the greén.

Despí | sed the | Athén | ian maid.

And hére | the maí | den sleé | ping sound.

To swéep | the dúst | behind | the dóor.

In one case the word *moon* is scanned as a disyllable—

Swif^tter | than the | mo^on's — | sp^here.

The scansion of the following lines is contested :—

(a) (Near this) la^acklove, | thi^s kill- | co^urte | sy. (*Abbot.*)

Near thi^s | la^acklove, | thi^s kill- | co^urt'sy. (*Verity.*)

Near thi^s | la^acklove, | thi^s — | kill-cour | tesy. (*Furness.*)

II. ii. 77.

(b) Ho^w now, | spi^r't, whi(th)er | waⁿder | you? (*Walker.*)

Ho^w now, | spi^rit, | whi^ther | waⁿder | you? (*Furness.* (?)

II. i. 1.

The following words have not the modern accentuation : *edict* (I. i. 152); *revenue* I. i. 158), but in I. i. 6 it is accented *révenue*; *rheumatic* (II. i. 105), *persever* (III. ii. 237), *sinister* (V. i. 161). The termination *-ion* sometimes counts as two syllables, e.g. *confusion* (I. i. 149) is four syllables, *imagination* (V. i. 18) is six syllables, though elsewhere in the speech it is only five. We find also *patience* three syllables (I. i. 152) and *changeling* three syllables (II. i. 23).

Metre in Shakespeare is always adapted to sense, and often to character. Thus Bottom always speaks prose and Titania verse, even when the two converse together. Hermia when she is angry is particularly emphatic, while Helena's words are more musical. Theseus speaks slowly. Oberon's lines in II. i. (246-256), "I know a bank," etc., have a lyrical tone which is not heard when he addresses Puck at the close of the scene. The monotony of the rhymes in Titania's speech (III. ii. 152-162) is distinctly cloying.

A MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THESEUS, Duke of Athens.
EGEUS, Father to Hermia.
LYSANDER, } in love with Hermia.
DEMETRIUS, }
PHILOSTRATE, master of the revels to Theseus.
QUINCE, a carpenter.
SNUG, a joiner.
BOTTOM, a weaver.
FLUTE, a bellows-mender.
SNOUT, a tinker.
STARVELING, a tailor.

HIPPOLYTA, queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus.

HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander.
HELENA, in love with Demetrius.

OBBERON, king of the fairies.
TITANIA, queen of the fairies.
PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow.
PEASEBLOSSOM, }
COBWEB, } fairies.
MOTH, }
MUSTARDEED, }
Other fairies attending their King and Queen.
Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.
SCENE: *Athens, and a wood near it.*

ACT I.

SCENE I. *Athens. The Palace of Theseus.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.

Theseus. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

5

Hippolyta. Four days will quickly steep themselves in
night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;

And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night 10
Of our solemnities.

Theseus. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments ;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth :
Turn melancholy forth to funerals ;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.—[*Exit Philostrate.*
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword, 16
And won thy love, doing thee injuries ;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

Egeus, Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke ! 20

Theseus. Thanks, good Egeus : what's the news with
thee ?

Egeus. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
Against my child, my daughter Hermia.—
Stand forth, Demetrius.—My noble lord,
This man hath my consent to marry her.— 25
Stand forth, Lysander :—and, my gracious duke,
This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child.—
Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
And interchang'd love-tokens with my child :
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung 30
With faining voice verses of faining love,
And stolen the impression of her fantasy
With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
Knacks, trifles, nosebags, sweetmeats, messengers
Of strong prevailment in unharden'd youth. 35
With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
To stubborn harshness :—and, my gracious duke,
Be it so she will not here before your grace

Consent to marry with Demetrius,
I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death, according to our law
Immediately provided in that case. 45

Theseus. What say you, Hermia? be advis'd, fair maid.
To you your father should be as a god;
One that compos'd your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power 50
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Hermia So is Lysander.

Theseus. In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier. 55

Hermia. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

Theseus. Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

Hermia I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty, 60
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

Theseus. Either to die the death, or to abjure 65
For ever the society of men.

Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun, 70
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.

Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
 To undergo such maiden pilgrimage; 75
 (But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
 Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
 Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.)

Hermia. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
 Ere I will yield my virgin patent up 80
 Unto his lordship^{to} whose unwished yoke
 My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

Theseus. Take time to pause; and, by the next new
 moon—

The sealing-day betwixt my love and me
 For everlasting bond of fellowship— 85
 Upon that day either prepare to die
 For disobedience to your father's will,
 Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
 Or on Diana's altar to protest
 For aye austerity and single life. 90

Demetrius. Relent, sweet *Hermia*:—and, *Lysander*, yield
 Thy crazed title to my certain right.

Lysander. You have her father's love, *Demetrius*;
 Let me have *Hermia*'s: do you marry him.

Egeus. Scornful *Lysander*! true, he hath my love, 95
 And what is mine my love shall render him;
 And she is mine, and all my right of her
 I do estate unto *Demetrius*.

Lysander. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
 As well possess'd; my love is more than his; 100
 My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
 If not with vantage, as *Demetrius*';
 And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
 I am belov'd of beauteous *Hermia*:
 Why should not I then prosecute my right? 105
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
 Made love to *Nedar*'s daughter, *Helena*,

And won her soul ; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man. 110

Theseus. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof ;
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it.—But, Demetrius, come ;
And come, Egeus ; you shall go with me : 115
I have some private schooling for you both.—
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will ;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up—
Which by no means we may extenuate— 120
To death, or to a vow of single life.—

Come, my Hippolyta : what cheer, my love ?—
Demetrius and Egeus, go along :
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial, and confer with you 125
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Egeus. With duty and desire we follow you.

[*Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.*]

Lysander. How now, my love ! why is your cheek so pale ?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast ?

Hermia. Belike for want of rain, which I could well 130
Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

Lysander. Ay me ! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
(The course of true love never did run smooth ;) 135
But, either it was different in blood,—

Hermia. O cross ! too high to be enthrall'd to low.

Lysander. Or else misgraffed in respect of years,—

Hermia. O spite ! too old to be engag'd to young.

Lysander. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends.—

Hermia. O hell ! to choose love by another's eyes. 140

Lysander. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,

War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentany as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night, 145
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.

Hermia. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd, 150
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers. 155

Lysander. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, *Hermia*.
I have a widow aunt, a dowager
Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
And she respects me as her only son. 160
There, gentle *Hermia*, may I marry thee;
And to that place the sharp Athenian law
Cannot pursue us. If thou lov'st me then,
Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
And in the wood, a league without the town, 165
Where I did meet thee once with *Helena*,
To do observance to a morn of May,
There will I stay for thee.

Hermia. My good *Lysander*!
I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head, 170
By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Trojan under sail was seen,
By all the vows that ever men have broke, 175

In number more than ever women spoke,
In that same place thou hast appointed me,
To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lysander. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Hermia. God speed, fair Helena! whither away? 180

Helena. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
Demetrius loves you fair: O happy fair!
Your eyes are lode-stars, and your tongue's sweet air
More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear. 185
Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, 190
The rest I 'd give to be to you translated.
O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Hermia. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

Helena. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such
skill! 195

Hermia. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

Helena. O that my prayers could such affection move!

Hermia. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Helena. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Hermia. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

Helena. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

Hermia. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;
Lysander and myself will fly this place.
Before the time I did *Lysander* see,
Seem'd Athens like a paradise to me: 205
O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
That he hath turn'd a heaven into a hell!

Lysander Helen, to you our minds we will unfold
 To-morrow night, when Phoebe doth behold
 Her silver visage in the watery glass, 210
 Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,
 A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,
 Through Athens' gates have we devis'd to steal.

Hermia. And in the wood, where often you and I
 Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie, 215
 Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,
 There my *Lysander* and myself shall meet;
 And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,
 To seek new friends and stranger companies.
 Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us, 220
 And good luck grant thee thy *Demetrius*!—
 Keep word, *Lysander*: we must starve our sight
 From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lysander. I will, my *Hermia*.— [Exit *Hermia*.

Helena, adieu:

As you on him, *Demetrius* dote on you! [Exit. 225

Helena. How happy some o'er other some can be!
 Through Athens I am thought as fair as she;
 But what of that? *Demetrius* thinks not so;
 He will not know what all but he do know:
 And as he errs, doting on *Hermia's* eyes, 230
 So I, admiring of his qualities.
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity.
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind: 235
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste;
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,
 Because in choice he is so oft beguil'd.
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear, 240
 So the boy Love is perjur'd every where:

For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolv'd, and showers of oaths did melt. 245
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight;
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
 Pursue her; and for this intelligence
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain,
 To have his sight thither and back again. 250
 [*Exit.*]

SCENE II. *Athens. Quince's House.*

*Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and
 STARVELING.*

Quince. Is all our company here?

Bottom. You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip:

Quince. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

Bottom. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

Quince. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable Comedy, and most cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby. 10

Bottom. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

Quince. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bottom. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quince. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus. 16

Bottom. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quince. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

Bottom. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will

move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest.
 —Yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Ercles
 rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. 23

The raging rocks
 And shivering shocks
 Shall break the locks
 Of prison gates;
 And Phibbus' car
 Shall shine from far,
 And make and mar
 The foolish Fates. 30

This was lofty!—Now name the rest of the players.—This is
 Ercles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

Quince. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flute. Here, Peter Quince. 35

Quince. Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

Flute. What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

Quince. It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

Flute. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a
 beard coming. 40

Quince. That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and
 you may speak as small as you will.

Bottom. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too.
 I'll speak in a monstrous little voice: "Thisne, Thisne."
 —"Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady
 dear!"

Quince. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you
 Thisby.

Bottom. Well, proceed.

Quince. Robin Starveling, the tailor. 50

Starveling. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother.
 —Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quince. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father.—

Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

Quince. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring. 61

Bottom. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say, "Let him roar again, let him roar again."

Quince. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bottom. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 't were any nightingale. 73

Quince. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus.

Bottom. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quince. Why, what you will.

Bottom. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow. 83

Quince. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced.—But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight. There will we rehearse; for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the

meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not. 92

Bottom. We will meet ; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains ; be perfect : adieu.

Quince. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bottom. Enough ; hold or cut bow-strings. [Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A Wood near Athens.*

Enter, from opposite sides, a Fairy and PUCK.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fairy. Over hill, over dale,

Thorough bush, thorough brier,

Over park, over pale,

Thorough flood, thorough fire,

5

I do wander every where,

Swifter than the moon's sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,

To dew her orbs upon the green.

The cowslips tall her pensioners be: *W.L.*

10

In their gold coats spots you see;

Those be rubies, fairy favours,

In those freckles live their savours.

I must go seek some dewdrops here,

And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

15

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:

Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night.

Take heed the queen come not within his sight;

For Oberon is passing fell and wrath,

20

Because that she as her attendant hath

A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;

She never had so sweet a changeling;

And jealous Oberon would have the child
Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild ; 25
But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy :
And now they never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear, or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves for fear 30
Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

Fairy. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
Call'd Robin Goodfellow. Are not you he
That frights the maidens of the villagery ; 35
Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern,
And bootless make the breathless housewife churn ;
And sometime make the drink to bear no barm ;
Mislead night-wanderers, laughing at their harm ?
Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck, 40
You do their work, and they shall have good luck :
Are not you he ?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright ;
I am that merry wanderer of the night.
I jest to Oberon, and make him smile
When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, 45
Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :
And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
In very likeness of a roasted crab,
And when she drinks, against her lips I hob
And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale. 50
The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;
Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
And "tailor" cries, and falls into a cough ;
And then the whole quire hold their lips and laugh, 55
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and swear
A merrier hour was never wasted there.

But, room, fairy ! here comes Oberon.

Fairy. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone !

Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his train ; from the other,
TITANIA, with hers.

Oberon. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

Titania. What, jealous Oberon ! Fairies, skip hence :
I have forsworn his bed and company.

Oberon. Tarry, rash wanton : am not I thy lord ?

Titania. Then I must be thy lady ; but I know
When thou hast stolen away from fairy land, 65
And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
Come from the farthest steep of India ?
But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love, 70
To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Oberon. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, 75
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus ?
Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished ?
And make him with fair Aegle break his faith,
With Ariadne and Antiopa ? 80

Titania. These are the forgeries of jealousy :
And never, since the middle summer's spring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook, 85
Or in the beached margent of the sea,
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,

As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
 Contagious fogs; which falling in the land 90
 Hath every pelting river made so proud
 That they have overborne their continents:
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
 Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard; 95
 The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
 And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
 The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
 For lack of tread are undistinguishable: 100
 The human mortals want^{"leak"} their winter here;
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound: 105
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 (The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds 110
 Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which.
 And this same progeny of evil comes 115
 From our debate, from our dissension;
 We are their parents and original.
Oberon. Do you amend it then; it lies in you;
 Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
 I do but beg a little changeling boy, 120
 To be my henchman.
Titania. Set your heart at rest:
 The fairy land buys not the child of me.

His mother was a votaress of my order :
 And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
 Full often hath she gossip'd by my side, 125
 And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
 Marking the embarked traders on the flood ;
 Which she with pretty and with swimming gait
 Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
 To fetch me trifles, and return again, 130
 As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
 But she, being mortal, of that boy did die ;
 And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
 And for her sake I will not part with him.

Oberon. How long within this wood intend you stay ? 135

Titania. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.

If you will patiently dance in our round
 And see our moonlight revels, go with us ;
 If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

Oberon. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee. 140

Titania. Not for thy fairy kingdom.—Fairies, away !
 We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[Exit Titania with her train.]

Oberon. Well, go thy way : thou shalt not from this grove
 Till I torment thee for this injury.—

My gentle Puck, come hither Thou rememberest 145
 Since once I sat upon a promontory,
 And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres, 150
 To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck. I remember.

Oberon. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
 Cupid all arm'd : a certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal throned by the west,

And loos'd his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy-free. 160

Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
And maidens call it love-in-idleness. 165

Fetch me that flower; the herb I show'd thee once:
The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.
Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again 170
Ere the leviathan can swim a league

Puck. I 'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes. [Exit.

Oberon. Having once this juice,
I 'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes. 175
The next thing then she waking looks upon,
Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
She shall pursue it with the soul of love;
And ere I take this charin from off her sight, 180
As I can take it with another herb,
I 'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.

Demetrius. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not. 185
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I 'll slay, the other slayeth me.

Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;
And here am I, and wode within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia. 190
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Helena. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant;
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you. 195

Demetrius. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth
Tell you, I do not nor I cannot love you?

Helena. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius, 200
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,— 205
And yet a place of high respect with me,—
Than to be used as you use your dog?

Demetrius. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Helena. And I am sick when I look not on you. 210

Demetrius. You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place 215
With the rich worth of your virginity.

Helena. Your virtue is my privilege; for that
It is not night when I do see your face,
Therefore I think I am not in the night;
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company, 220
For you in my respect are all the world:
Then how can it be said I am alone,

When all the world is here to look on me?

Demetrius I 'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts. 225

Helena. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
Run when you will, the story shall be chang'd:
Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed, 230
When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

Demetrius. I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Helena. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field, 235
You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex:
We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
We should be woo'd, and were not made to woo.

[*Exit Demetrius.*

I 'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell, 240
To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit*

Oberon. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love.—

Enter Puck.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Oberon. I pray thee, give it me. 245
I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night, 250
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:

And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
 And make her full of hateful fantasies. 255
 Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove :
 A sweet Athenian lady is in love
 With a disdainful youth : anoint his eyes ;
 But do it when the next thing he espies
 May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man 260
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.
 Effect it with some care, that he may prove
 More fond on her than she upon her love :
 And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow. 264
Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Another Part of the Wood.**Enter TITANIA, with her train.*

Titania. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song ;
 Then, for the third part of a minute, hence ;
 Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back 5
 The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep ;
 Then to your offices and let me rest.

Song.

1 Fairy *You spotted snakes with double tongue,*
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen ; 10
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
 Come not near our fairy queen.
 Chorus. *Philomel, with melody*
 Sing in our sweet lullaby ;
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby : 15
 Never harm,
 Nor spell nor charm,

*Come our lovely lady nigh ;
So, good night, with lullaby.*

2 Fairy. *Weaving spiders, come not here ;* 20
Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence !
Beetles black, approach not near ;
Worm nor snail, do no offence

Chorus. *Phlomet, with melody, etc.*

1 Fairy. *Hence, away ! now all is well :* 25
One aloof stand sentinel.

[Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.]

Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.

Oberon. *What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take :
Love and languish for his sake :
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,* 30
*I'ard, or boar with bristled hair,
In thy eye that shall appear
When thou wak'st, it is thy dear :
Wake when some vile thing is near.* *[Exit.]*

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.

Lysander. *Fair love, you faint with wandering in the*
wood ; 35
And to speak troth, I have forgot our way :
We 'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Hermia. *Be it so, Lysander : find you out a bed ;*
For I upon this bank will rest my head. 40

Lysander. *One turf shall serve as pillow for us both ;*
One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

Hermia. *Nay, good Lysander ; for my sake, my dear,*
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

Lysander. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence! 45
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
So that but one heart we can make of it:
Two bosoms interchained with an oath,
So then two bosoms and a single troth 50
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
For lying so, *Hermia*, I do not lie.

Hermia. *Lysander* riddles very prettily:
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
If *Hermia* meant to say *Lysander* lied. 55
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off; in human modesty,
Such separation as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend: 60
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Lysander. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
And then end life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest! 64

Hermia. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!
[*They sleep.*]

Enter Puck.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
But Athenian found I none,
On whose eyes I might approve
This flower's force in stirring love.
Night and silence.—Who is here? 70
Weeds of Athens he doth wear:
This is he, my master said,
Despised the Athenian maid;
And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
On the dank and dirty ground. 75
Pretty soul! she durst not lie

Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
 All the power this charm doth owe.
 When thou wak'st, let love forbid 80
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid!
 So awake when I am gone:
 For I must now to Oberon. *[Exit.*

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running.

Helena. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius. 84

Demetrius. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Helena. O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

Demetrius. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go. *[Exit.*

Helena. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies; 90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes,

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear: 95

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery cyne?—

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground! 100

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.—

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lysander. *[Awaking.]* And run through fire I will for
 thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart. 105

Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word

Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Helena. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?
Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content. 110

Lysander. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.
Not Hermia but Helena I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove?
The will of man is by his reason sway'd, 115
And reason says you are the worthier maid.
Things growing are not ripe until their season:
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason;
And touching now the point of human skill,
Reason becomes the marshal to my will 120
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Helena. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man, 125
That I did never, no, nor never can,
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
But you must flout my insufficiency?
Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
In such disdainful manner me to woo. 130
But fare you well. perforce I must confess
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
O, that a lady, of one man refus'd,
Should of another therefore be abus'd! [Exit.

Lysander. She sees not Hermia.—Hermia, sleep thou
there: 135
And never mayst thou come Lysander near!
For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
Or as the heresies that men do leave
Are hated most of those they did deceive, 140
So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,

Of all be hated, but the most of me!

And, all my powers, address your love and might

To honour Helen and to be her knight!

[*Exit.*

Hermia. [*Awaking.*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy
best

145

To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast!

Ay me, for pity! what a dream was here!

Lysander, look how I do quake with fear:

Methought a serpent eat my heart away,

And you sat smiling at his cruel prey.

150

Lysander! what, remov'd? Lysander! lord!

What, out of hearing? gone? no sound, no word?

Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;

Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.

No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:

155

Either death or you I'll find immediately.

[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The Wood. Titania lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Bottom. Are we all met?

Quince. Pat, pat; and here 's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action as we will do it before the duke. 5

Bottom. Peter Quince,—

Quince. What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

Bottom. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that? 11

Snout. By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Starveling. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all is done.

Bottom. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not killed indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this will put them out of fear. 20

Quince. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall be written in eight and six.

Bottom. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion? 25

Starveling. I fear it, I promise you.

Bottom. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves · to bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to 't. 30

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bottom. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—“Ladies,”—or “Fair ladies,—I would wish you,”—or “I would request you,”—or “I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are”; and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. 41

Quince. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bottom. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine

Quince. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bottom. Why, then you may leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement. 51

Quince. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes in to disfigure. or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?

Bottom. Some man or other must present Wall: and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quince If that may be, then all is well Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake; and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK behind.

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?

What, a play toward? I'll be an auditor; 70
An actor too perhaps, if I see cause

Quince. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby, stand forth.

Bottom. Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—

Quince. Odours, odours.

Bottom. — odours savours sweet · 75

So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.

But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,

And by and by I will to thee appear. [*Exit.*

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here! [*Exit.*

Flute. Must I speak now? 80

Quince. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flute. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue,

Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,

Most brisk juvenile and eke most lovely Jew. 85

As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,

I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quince. "Ninus' tomb," man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus, enter: your cue is past; it is, "never tire." 91

Flute. O,—As true as truest horse that yet would never tire

Enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.

Bottom If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.—

Quince. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help! 95

[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]

Puck. I 'll follow you, I 'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier :
Sometime a horse I 'll be, sometime a hound,

A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire ;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn 100
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. *[Exit.]*

Bottom Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afeard.

Re-enter SNOUT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee? 105

Bottom What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? *[Exit Snout.]*

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quince. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. *[Exit.]* 109

Bottom. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid.

[Sings.]

The ouzel cock so black of hue,

With orange-tawny bill,

115

The throistle with his note so true,

The wren with little quill,—

Titania. *[Awaking.]*

What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bottom. [Sings]

*The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,* 120
*Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay;—*

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird?
who would give the bird the lie, though he cry "cuckoo"
never so? 125

Titania. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. 130

Bottom. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason
for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep
little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that
some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay,
I can glee upon occasion. 135

Titania. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bottom. Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to
get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own
turn.

Titania. Out of this wood do not desire to go: 140
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate:
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me.
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee, 145
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so,
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed! 150

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED.

Peaseblossom. Ready.

Cobweb. And I.

Moth. And I.

Mustardseed. And I.

All. Where shall we go?

Titania. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman;

Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes;

Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries: 155

The honey-bags steal from the humble-bees,

And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,

And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,

To have my love to bed and to arise;

And pluck the wings from painted butterflies 160

To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.

Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

Peaseblossom Hail, mortal!

Cobweb. Hail!

Moth. Hail! 165

Mustardseed. Hail!

Bottom. I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cobweb. Cobweb.

Bottom. (I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you.—Your name, honest gentleman?) 172

Peaseblossom. Peaseblossom.

Bottom. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too.—Your name, I beseech you, sir? 177

Mustardseed. Mustardseed.

Bottom. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house, I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed. 183

Titania. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *Another Part of the Wood.*

Enter OBERON.

Oberon. I wonder if Titania be awak'd;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter PUCK.

Here comes my messenger.—

How now, mad spirit!

What night-rule now about this haunted grove? 5

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.

Near to her close and consecrated bower,

While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,

A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,

That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10

Were met together to rehearse a play

Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day.

The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,

Who Pyramus presented, in their sport

Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake: 15

When I did him at this advantage take,

An ass's nolle I fixed on his head.

Anon his Thisbe must be answered,

And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,

As wild gcese that the creeping fowler eye, 20
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly ;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls ; 25
He murther cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong ;
For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch ,
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch. 30
I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there ;
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania wak'd, and straightway lov'd an ass.
Oberon. This falls out better than I could devise. 35
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do ?
Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finished too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side ;
That, when he wak'd, of force she must be eyed 40

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.

Oberon. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Demetrius. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so ?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Hermia. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse, 45
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50
As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I 'll believe as soon

This whole earth may be bor'd, and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes. 55
It cannot be but thou hast murther'd him;
So should a murtherer look, so dead, so grim.

Demetrius. So should the murther'd look, and so should I,
Pierc'd through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murtherer, look as bright, as clear, 60
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Hermia. What 's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Demetrius. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Hermia. Out, dog! out cur! thou driv'st me past the
bounds 65

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave touch! 70
Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Demetrius. You spend your passion on a mispris'd mood:
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood; 75
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Hermia. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Demetrius. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Hermia. A privilege never to see me more.
And from thy hated presence part I so: 80
See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [Exit.

Demetrius. There is no following her in this fierce vein:
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow
For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe; 85
Which now in some slight measure it will pay.

If for his tender here I make some stay.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Oberon What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite,
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight :
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90
Some true love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'errules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Oberon. About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find : 95
All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear.
By some illusion see you bring her here :
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go ; look how I go, 100
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. [*Exit.*]

Oberon. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy, 105
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter Puck.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band, 110
Helena is here at hand ;
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see ?
Lord, what fools these mortals be !
Oberon. Stand aside : the noise they make 115
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one :
That must needs be sport alone ;
And those things do best please me 120
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.

Lysander. Why should you think that I should woo in
scorn ?

Scorn and derision never come in tears .
Look, when I vow I weep ; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears. 125
How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true ?

Helena You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray !
These vows are Hermia's : will you give her o'er ? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh :
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales .)

Lysander. I had no judgment when to her I swore.

Helena. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er. 135

Lysander. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Demetrius. [*Awaking.*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect,
divine !

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne ?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow ! 140
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss !

Helena. O spite ! O hell ! I see you all are bent 145
To set against me for your merriment :
If you were civil and knew courtesy,

You would not do me thus much injury.
 Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
 But you must join in souls to mock me too ? 150
 If you were men, as men you are in show,
 You would not use a gentle lady so ;
 To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
 When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
 You both are rivals, and love Hermia ; 155
 And now both rivals, to mock Helena.
 A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
 To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
 With your derision ! none of noble sort
 Would so offend a virgin, and extort 160
 A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lysander. You are unkind, Demetrius ; be not so ;
 For you love Hermia ; this you know I know :
 And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
 In Hermia's love I yield you up my part : 165
 And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
 Whom I do love, and will do till my death.

Helena. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Demetrius. Lysander, keep thy Hermia ; I will none :
 If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone 170
 My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
 And now to Helen is it home return'd,
 There to remain.

Lysander. Helen, it is not so.

Demetrius. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
 Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear. 175
 Look, where thy love comes ; yonder is thy dear.

Enter HERMIA.

Hermia. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
 The ear more quick of apprehension makes ;
 Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,

It pays the hearing double recompense. 180

Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
My ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.

But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Lysander. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

Hermia. What love could press Lysander from my side? 185

Lysander. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide;
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night

Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light

Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,

The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so? 190

Hermia. You speak not as you think. it cannot be.

Helena. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!

Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three

To fashion this false sport in spite of me.

Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid! 195

Have you conspir'd, have you with these contriv'd

To bait me with this foul derision?

Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,

The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,

When we have chid the hasty-footed time 200

For parting us,—O, is all forgot?

All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,

Have with our needles created both one flower,

Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion, 205

Both warbling of one song, both in one key,

As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,

Had been incorporate. So we grew together,

Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,

But yet an union in partition, 210

Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;

So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;

Two of the first, like coats in heraldry

Due but to one and crowned with one crest

And will you rent our ancient love asunder, 215
To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
It is not friendly, 't is not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury.

Hermia. I am amazed at your passionate words. 220
I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

Helena. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
And made your other love, Demetrius,
Who even but now did spurn me with his foot, 225
To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
And tender me, forsooth, affection, 230
But by your setting on, by your consent?
What though I be not so in grace as you,
So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
But miserable most, to love unlov'd?
This you should pity rather than despise. 235

Hermia. I understand not what you mean by this.

Helena. Ay, do, persevere, counterfeit sad looks,
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:
This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument.
But fare ye well: 't is partly my own fault,
Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

Lysander. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse: 245
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Helena. O excellent!

Hermia. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Demetrius. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lysander. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat :
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.—
Helen, I love thee ; by my life, I do : 251
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Demetrius. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lysander. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too. 255

Demetrius. Quick, come !

Hermia. Lysander, whereto tends all this ?

Lysander. Away, you Ethiope !

Demetrius. No, no, sir ;
Seem to break loose ; take on as you would follow,
But yet come not · you are a tame man, go !

Lysander. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr ! vile thing, let
loose, 260

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent !

Hermia. Why are you grown so rude ? what change is this ?
Sweet love, —

Lysander. Thy love ! out, tawny Tartar, out !
Out, loathed medicine ! hated potion, hence !

Hermia. Do you not jest ?

Helena. Yes, sooth ; and so do you. 265

Lysander. Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Demetrius. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you : I 'll not trust your word.

Lysander. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her
dead ?

Although I hate her, I 'll not harm her so. 270

Hermia. What, can you do me greater harm than hate ?
Hate me ! wherefore ? O me ! what news, my love ?
Am not I Hermia ? are not you Lysander ?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.

Since night you lov'd me ; yet since night you left me : 275
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid !—
In earnest, shall I say ?

Lysander Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 't is no jest 280
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

Hermia. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

Helena. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame, 285
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue!
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

Hermia. Puppet! why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290
Between our statures; she hath urg'd her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low? 295
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Helena. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst; 300
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

Hermia. Lower! hark, again. 305

Helena. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,

I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back, 315
And follow you no further. Let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Hermia Why, get you gone. who is 't that hinders you?

Helena. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Hermia. What, with Lysander?

Helena With Demetrius. 320

Lysander. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena

Demetrius. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Helena. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!

She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce. 325

Hermia. Little again! nothing but low and little!

Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?

Let me come to her.

Lysander. Get you gone, you dwarf;

You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;

You bead, you acorn.

Demetrius. You are too officious 330

In her behalf that scorns your services.

Let her alone: speak not of Helena;

Take not her part; for if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,

Thou shalt aby it.

Lysander. Now she holds me not; 335

Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,

Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Demetrius. Follow! nay, I 'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

Hermia You, mistress, all this coil is long of you :
Nay, go not back.

Helena. I will not trust you, I, 340
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer, though, to run away. [*Exit.*

Hermia. I am amaz'd, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*

Oberon. This is thy negligence; still thou mistak'st, 345
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on ?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise, 350
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;
And so far am I glad it so did sort,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Oberon. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight :
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ; 355
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way,
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep : 365
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake, all this derision 370
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,

With league whose date till death shall never end.

Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,

I 'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;

375

And then I will her charmed eye release

From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste;

For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,

And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,

380

At whose approach, 'ghosts, wandering here and there,

Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,

That in crossways and floods have burial,

Already to their wormy beds are gone;

For fear lest day should look their shames upon,

385

They wilfully themselves exile from light,

And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.)

Oberon. But we are spirits of another sort:

I with the morning's love have oft made sport,

And, like a forester, the groves may tread,

390

Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,

Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,

Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.)

But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:

We may effect this business yet ere day.

[*Exit.* 395

Puck. Up and down, up and down,

I will lead them up and down:

I am fear'd in field and town:

Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one.

400

Enter LYSANDER.

Lysander. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou now.

Puck. Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

Lysander. I will be with thee straight

Puck.

Follow me, then,

To plainer ground.

[*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*

To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Enter HELENA.

Helena. O weary night, O long and tedious night, 431
Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:
And sleep, that sometime shuts up sorrow's eye, 435
Steal me awhile from mine own company.
[*Lies down and sleeps*]

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad, 440
Thus to make poor females mad.

Enter HERMIA

Hermia. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires. 445
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Puck. On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply 450
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
[*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.*]
When thou wak'st,
Thou tak'st
True delight 455
In the sight

Of thy former lady's eye :
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown :

460

Jack shall have Jill ;

Nought shall go ill ;

The man shall have his mare again, and all shall be well,

Exit

ACT IV.

SCENE I. *The Same.* LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HELENA,
and HERMIA *lying asleep.*

Enter TITANIA and BOTTOM ; PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH,
MUSTARDSEED, and other Fairies attending ; OBERON behind
unseen.

Titania. Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,
And stick musk-roses in thy sleek smooth head,
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.

Bottom. Where 's Peaseblossom ?

5

Peaseblossom. Ready.

Bottom. Scratch my head, Peaseblossom. Where's Moun-
sieur Cobweb ?

Cobweb. Ready.

9

Bottom. Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur, get you your
weapons in your hand, and kill me a red-hipped humble-
bee on the top of a thistle ; and, good mounsieur, bring me
the honey-bag. Do not fret yourself too much in the action,
mounsieur ; and, good mounsieur, have a care the honey-bag
break not ; I would be loath to have you overflown with a
honey-bag, signior. Where 's Mounsieur Mustardseed ?

16

Mustardseed. Ready.

Bottom. Give me your neaf, Mounsieur Mustardseed.
Pray you, leave your courtesy, good mounsieur.

Mustardseed. What 's your will ?

20

Bottom. Nothing, good mounsieur, but to help Cavalery Cobweb to scratch. I must to the barber's, mounsieur; for methinks I am marvellous hairy about the face; and I am such a tender ass, if my hair do but tickle me I must scratch.

Titania. What, wilt thou hear some music, my sweet love?

Bottom. I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones. 27

Titania. Or say, sweet love, what thou desirest to eat.

Bottom. Truly, a peck of provender: I could munch your good dry oats. Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow. 31

Titania. I have a venturous fairy that shall seek The squirrel's hoard, and fetch thee new nuts.

Bottom. I had rather have a handful or two of dried peas. But, I pray you, let none of your people stir me: I have an exposition of sleep come upon me. 36

Titania. Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. [*Exeunt fairies*]
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so 40
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! [*They sleep.*]

Enter PUCK.

Oberon. [*Advancing.*] Welcome, good Robin. See'st thou this sweet sight?

Her dotage now I do begin to pity:
For, meeting her of late behind the wood, 45
Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her.
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds 50
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes

Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her
And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child;
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in fairy land.

55

And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes :
And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain ;
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the fairy queen.

60

65

Be as thou wast wont to be ;
See as thou wast wont to see ;
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessed

70

Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

Titania My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamour'd of an ass.

Oberon. There lies your love.

Titania How came these things to pass? 75
O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

Oberon. Silence awhile.—Robin, take off this head.—

Titania, music call; and strike more dead
Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Titania. Music, ho ! music, such as charmeth sleep ! 80

[*Music, still.*]

Puck. Now, when thou wak'st, with thine own fool's eyes
peep

Oberon. Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands
with me.

And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.

Now thou and I are new in amity,
 And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
 Dance in Duke 'Theseus' house triumphantly, 85
 And bless it to all fair posterity
 There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
 Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity.

Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark : 90
 I do hear the morning lark.

Oberon. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
 Trip we after the night's shade :
 We the globe can compass soon,
 Swifter than the wandering moon. 95

Titania. Come, my lord, and in our flight
 Tell me how it came this night
 That I sleeping here was found
 With these mortals on the ground. [*Exeunt*
[Horns winded within.]

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train.

Theseus. Go, one of you, find out the forester ; 100
 For now our observation is perform'd :
 And since we have the vaward of the day,
 My love shall hear the music of my hounds.—
 Uncouple in the western valley ; let them go !— 104
 Dispatch, I say, and find the forester.—[*Exit an Attendant.*
 We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top
 And mark the musical confusion
 Of hounds and echo in conjunction.

Hippolyta. [I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
 When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear 110
 With hounds of Sparta ; never did I hear
 Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,
 The skies, the fountains, every region near
 Seem'd all one mutual cry. I never heard
 So musical a discord, such sweet thunder. 115]

Theseus. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew,
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells, 120
Each under each. A cry more tuneable
Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:

Judge when you hear.—But, soft! what nymphs are these?

Egeus. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep; 125
And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:
I wonder of their being here together.

Theseus. No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May, and, hearing our intent, 130
Came here in grace of our solemnity.—
But speak, Egeus; is not this the day
That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

Egeus. It is, my lord.

Theseus. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their
horns 135

[*Horns and shout within. Lysander, Demetrius,
Helena, and Hermia wake and start up.*]

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:
Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Lysander. Pardon, my lord.

Theseus. I pray you all, stand up,
I know you two are rival enemies:
How comes this gentle concord in the world, 140
That hatred is so far from jealousy,
To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

Lysander. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking:—but as yet, I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here; 145
But, as I think,—for truly would I speak

And now I do bethink me, so it is,—
I came with Hermia hither: our intent
Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
Without the peril of the Athenian law— 150

Egeus. Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough:
I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
They would have stolen away; they would, Demetrius,
Thereby to have defeated you and me,
You of your wife and me of my consent, 155
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

Demetrius. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood;
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me. 160
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,—
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gawd
Which in my childhood I did dote upon: 165
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord,
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food; 170
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

Theseus. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:
Of this discourse we more will hear anon. 175
Egeus, I will overbear your will;
For in the temple, by and by, with us
These couples shall eternally be knit:
And, for this morning now is something worn,
Our purpos'd hunting shall be set aside. 180
Away with us to Athens: three and three,

We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.—
Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.*]

Demetrius. These things seem small and undistinguish-
able,

Like far-off mountains turned into clouds. 185

Hermia. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

Helena. So methinks :
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
Mine own, and not mine own.

Demetrius. It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think 190
The duke was here, and bid us follow him ?

Hermia. Yea ; and my father.

Helena. And Hippolyta.

Lysander. And he did bid us follow to the temple

Demetrius. Why, then, we are awake : let's follow him. 194
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt*

Bottom. [*Awaking.*] When my cue comes, call me, and I
will answer : my next is, "Most fair Pyramus." Heigh-ho !
Peter Quince ! Flute, the bellows-mender ! Snout, the
tinker ! Starveling ! God's my life, stolen hence, and left
me asleep ! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a
dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was : man
is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought
I was,—there is no man can tell what. Methought
I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched
fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye
of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's
hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his
heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince
to write a ballad of this dream ; it shall be called Bottom's
Dream, because it hath no bottom ; and I will sing it in the

latter end of a play, before the duke peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. [*Exit*

SCENE II. *Athens. Quince's House.*

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOUT, and STARVELING.

Quince. Have you sent to Bottom's house ? is he come home yet ?

Starveling He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported

Flute. If he come not, then the play is marred : it goes not forward, doth it ? 6

Quince. It is not possible : you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flute. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens. 10

Quince. Yea, and the best person too ; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flute. You must say paragon : a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married : if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men. 17

Flute. {O, sweet bully Bottom ! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life ; he could not have scaped sixpence a day : an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I 'll be hanged ; he would have deserved it : sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.} 22

Enter BOTTOM.

Bottom. Where are these lads ? where are these hearts ?

Quince. Bottom ! O most courageous day ! O most happy hour !

Bottom. Masters, I am to discourse wonders : but ask me not what ; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

Quince. Let us hear, sweet Bottom. 29

Bottom. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps ; meet presently at the palace ; every man look o'er his part ; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen ; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to utter sweet breath ; and I do not doubt but to hear them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words : away ! go, away ! [Exit.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Athens. The Palace of Theseus.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, and Attendants.

Hippolyta. 'T is strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

Theseus. More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend 5
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, 10
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven:
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen 15
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy; 20
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush suppos'd a bear!

Hippolyta. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigur'd so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images, 25
And grows to something of great constancy,
But, howsoever, strange and admirable

Theseus Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, and HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

Lysander. More than to us 30
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

Theseus. Come now, what masques, what dances shall we
have,

To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth? 35
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

Philostrate. Here, mighty Theseus.

Theseus. Say, what abridgment have you for this evening?
What masque? what music? How shall we beguile 40
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

Philostrate. There is a brief how many sports are ripe:
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[*Giving a paper.*]

Theseus. [Reads] "*The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.*" 45

We'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

[Reads "*The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage*"]

That is an old device; and it was play'd 50

When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

[Reads] "*The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceas'd in beggary.*"

That is some satire, keen and critical,

Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

55

[Reads] "*A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
And his love Thisbe ; very tragical mirth.*"

Merry and tragical ! tedious and brief !

That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.

How shall we find the concord of this discord ?

60

Philostrate. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,

Which is as brief as I have known a play ;

But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,

Which makes it tedious ; for in all the play

There is not one word apt, one player fitted.

65

And tragical, my noble lord, it is ;

For Pyramus therein doth kill himself :

Which, when I saw rehears'd, I must confess,

Made mine eyes water ; but more merry tears

The passion of loud laughter never shed.

70

Theseus. What are they that do play it ?

Philostrate. Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,

Which never labour'd in their minds till now,

And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories

With this same play, against your nuptial.

75

Theseus. And we will hear it.

Philostrate.

No, my noble lord ;

It is not for you : I have heard it over,

And it is nothing, nothing in the world,

Unless you can find sport in their intents,

Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain,

80

To do you service.

Theseus. I will hear that play ;

For never any thing can be amiss,

When simpleness and duty tender it.

Go, bring them in : and take your places, ladies.

[*Exit Philostrate.*]

Hippolyta. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharg'd, 85
And duty in his service perishing.

Theseus. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing,

Hippolyta. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

Theseus The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
Our sport shall be to take what they mistake : 90
And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
Takes it in might, not merit
Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes ;
Where I have seen them shiver and look pale, 95
Make periods in the midst of sentences,
Throttle their practis'd accent in their fears,
And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome ; 100
And in the modesty of fearful duty
I read as much as from the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
In least speak most to my capacity. 105

Enter PHILOSTRATE.

Philostrate. So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.

Theseus. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

Enter QUINCE for the Prologue.

Prologue. If we offend, it is with our good will
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will To show our simple skill, 110
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then we come-but in despite,
We do not come as minding to content you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight

We are not here, That you should here repent you, 115
The actors are at hand, and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know.

Theseus. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lysander. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt ; he
knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord : it is not
enough to speak, but to speak true. 121

Hippolyta. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a
child on a recorder ; a sound, but not in government

Theseus. His speech was like a tangled chain ; nothing
impaired, but all disordered. Who is next ? 125

Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION.

Prologue. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show ;

But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.

This man is Pyramus, if you would know ;

This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.

This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present 130

Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder ;

And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content

To whisper ; at the which let no man wonder.

This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,

Presenteth Moonshine ; for, if you will know, 135

By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn

To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.

This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,

The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,

Did scare away, or rather did affright ; 140

And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,

Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.

Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,

And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain :

Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade, 145

He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast ;

And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,

His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,

Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
At large discourse, while here they do remain. 150

[*Exeunt Prologue, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.*]

Theseus. I wonder if the lion be to speak

Demetrius. No wonder, my lord : one lion may, when many
asses do.

Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall ;
And such a wall, as I would have you think, 155
That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
Did whisper often very secretly.
This loam, this rough-cast, and this stone doth show
That I am that same wall . the truth is so ; 160
And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

Theseus. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better ?

Demetrius. It is the wittiest partation that ever I heard
discourse, my lord. 165

Theseus. Pyramus draws near the wall : silence !

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyramus. O grim look'd night ! O night with hue so black !
O night, which ever art when day is not !
O night, O night ! alack, alack, alack,
I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot ! 170
And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
That stand'st between her father's ground and mine !
Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne !

[*Wall holds up his fingers.*]

Thanks, courteous wall : Jove shield thee well for this ! 175

But what see I ? No Thisby do I see.

O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss !

Curst be thy stones for thus deceiving me !

Theseus. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse
again. 180

Pyramus. No, in truth, sir, he should not. "Deceiving me" is Thisby's cue. she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you Yonder she comes.

Enter THISBE.

Thisbe. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans, 185

For parting my fair Pyramus and me !

My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,

Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

Pyramus. I see a voice ; now will I to the chink,
To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face. 190
Thisby !

Thisbe. My love thou art, my love I think.

Pyramus. Think what thou wilt, I am thy lover's grace ;
And, like Limander, am I trusty still.

Thisbe. And I like Helen, till the Fates me kill.

Pyramus. Not Shafalus to Procrus was so true. 195

Thisbe. As Shafalus to Procrus, I to you.

Pyramus. O, kiss me through the hole of this vile wall !

Thisbe. I kiss the wall's hole, not your lips at all.

Pyramus. Wilt thou at Ninny's tomb meet me straightway ?

Thisbe. 'Tide life, 'tide death, I come without delay. 200

[Exeunt Pyramus and Thisbe.]

Wall. Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so ;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go. *[Exit.]*

Theseus. Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.

Demetrius. No remedy, my lord, when walls are so wilful
to hear without warning. 206

Hippolyta. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

Theseus The best in this kind are but shadows ; and the
worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

Hippolyta. It must be your imagination then, and not
theirs. 211

Theseus If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men. Here come two noble beasts in, a man and a lion.

Enter LION and MOONSHINE.

Lion. You, ladies, you, whose gentle hearts do fear 215
 The smallest monstrous mouse that creeps on floor,
 May now perchance both quake and tremble here,
 When lion rough in wildest rage doth roar.
 Then know that I, one Snug the joiner, am
 A lion-fell, nor else no lion's dam ; 220
 For if I should as lion come in strife
 Into this place, 't were pity of my life

Theseus. A very gentle beast, and of a good conscience.

Demetrius The very best at a beast, my lord, that e'er I 225
 saw

Lysander. This lion is a very fox for his valour.

Theseus. True ; and a goose for his discretion

Demetrius. Not so, my lord ; for his valour cannot carry
 his discretion, and the fox carries the goose.

Theseus. His discretion, I am sure, cannot carry his valour,
 for the goose carries not the fox. It is well leave it to his
 discretion, and let us listen to the moon. 232

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;—

Demetrius. He should have worn the horns on his head.

Theseus. He is no crescent, and his horns are invisible
 within the circumference.

Moon. This lanthorn doth the horned moon present ;
 Myself the man i' the moon do seem to be

Theseus. This is the greatest error of all the rest. The
 man should be put into the lanthorn How is it else the
 man i' the moon ? 241

Demetrius. He dares not come there for the candle ; for,
 you see, it is already in snuff.

Hippolyta. I am aweary of this moon · would he would
 change !

Theseus. It appears, by his small light of discretion, that he is in the wane; but yet, in courtesy, in all reason, we must stay the time.

Lysander. Proceed, Moon.

Moon. All that I have to say is to tell you that the lanthorn is the moon; I, the man i' the moon; this thorn-bush, my thorn-bush; and this dog, my dog. 252

Demetrius. Why, all these should be in the lanthorn: for they are in the moon. But silence! here comes Thisbe

Enter THISBE

Thisbe. This is old Ninny's tomb Where is my love? 255

Lion. [*Roaring.*] Oh—— [*Thisbe runs off*]

Demetrius. Well roared, Lion.

Theseus. Well run, Thisbe.

Hippolyta. Well shone, Moon. Truly, the moon shines with a good grace. [*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*]

Theseus. Well moused, Lion 260

Demetrius. And then came Pyramus.

Lysander. And so the lion vanished.

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyramus. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;

I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;

For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams, 265

I trust to taste of truest Thisby's sight.

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

270

How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear!

Thy mantle good,

What, stained with blood!

Approach, ye Furies fell!

275

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

Theseus. This passion, and the death of a dear friend,
would go near to make a man look sad. 280

Hippolyta. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyramus. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame?
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame
That liv'd, that lov'd, that lik'd, that look'd with cheer. 285

Come, tears, confound;
Out, sword, and wound
The pap of Pyramus;
Ay, that left pap,
Where heart doth hop: [*Stabs himself.*
Thus die I, thus, thus, thus. 291
Now am I dead,
Now am I fled;
My soul is in the sky.
Tongue, lose thy light! 295
Moon, take thy flight! [*Exit Moonshine*
Now die, die, die, die, die. [*Dies.*

Demetrius. No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one

Lysander. Less than an ace, man, for he is dead; he is
nothing. 300

Theseus. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover,
and prove an ass.

Hippolyta. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe
comes back and finds her lover?

Theseus. She will find him by starlight Here she comes;
and her passion ends the play. 306

Re-enter THISBE.

Hippolyta. Methinks she should not use a long one for
such a Pyramus: I hope she will be brief.

Demetrius. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus,
which Thisbe, is the better: he for a man, God warrant us;
she for a woman, God bless us. 311

Lysander. She hath spied him already with those sweet
eyes.

Demetrius And thus she means, videlicet:—

Thisbe. Asleep, my love? 315
 What, dead, my dove?
 O Pyramus, arise!
 Speak, speak. Quite dumb?
 Dead, dead? A tomb
 Must cover thy sweet eyes. 320
 These lily lips,
 This cherry nose,
 These yellow cowslip cheeks,
 Are gone, are gone.
 Lovers, make moan! 325
 His eyes were green as leeks.
 O Sisters Three,
 Come, come to me,
 With hands as pale as milk;
 Lay them in gore, . 330
 Since you have shore
 With shears his thread of silk.
 Tongue, not a word:
 Come, trusty sword;
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [*Stabs herself.*
 And, farewell, friends! 336
 Thus Thisbe ends:
 Adieu, adieu, adieu! [*Dies.*

Theseus. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Demetrius Ay, and Wall too. 340

Bottom. [*Starting up.*] No, I assure you: the wall is down that parted their fathers Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company? 344

Theseus. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy; and so it is, truly, and very notably discharged But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve : 352
 Lovers, to bed ; 't is almost fairy time.
 I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn
 As much as we this night have overwatch'd. 355
 This palpable-gross play hath well beguil'd
 The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.
 A fortnight hold we this solemnity,
 In nightly revels and new jollity. [Exeunt

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars, 360
 And the wolf behowls the moon ;
 Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,
 All with weary task fordone
 Now the wasted brands do glow,
 Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud, 365
 Puts the wretch that lies in woe
 In remembrance of a shroud.
 Now it is the time of night
 That the graves, all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite, 370
 In the church-way paths to glide :
 And we fairies, that do run
 By the triple Hecate's team,
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream, 375
 Now are frolic ; not a mouse
 Shall disturb this hallow'd house :
 I am sent with broom before,
 To sweep the dust behind the door.

Enter OBERON and TITANIA with their train.

Oberon. Through the house give glimmering light, 380
 By the dead and drowsy fire :
 Every elf and fairy sprite

- Hop as light as bird from brier;
 And this ditty, after me,
 Sing, and dance it trippingly 385
Titania First, rehearse your song by rote,
 To each word a warbling note:
 Hand in hand with fairy grace,
 Will we sing and bless this place
 [Song and dance
- Oberon.* Now, until the break of day, 390
 Through this house each fairy stray.
 To the best bride-bed will we,
 Which by us shall blessed be:
 So shall all the couples three
 Ever true in loving be: 395
 And the blots of Nature's hand
 Shall not in their issue stand;
 Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
 Nor mark prodigious, such as are
 Despised in nativity, 400
 Shall upon their children be.
 With this field-dew consecrate,
 Every fairy take his gait;
 And each several chamber bless,
 Through this palace, with sweet peace: 405
 And the owner of it blest
 Ever shall in safety rest.
 Trip away; make no stay;
 Meet me all by break of day.
 [Exeunt Oberon, Titania, and train.
- Puck.* If we shadows have offended, 410
 Think but this, and all is mended,
 That you have but slumber'd here
 While these visions did appear.
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream, 415
 Gentles, do not reprehend:

If you pardon, we will mend,
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long ;
Else the Puck a liar call :
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

420

[*Exit.*]

NOTES.

Reference to passages in this and other plays are to Acts, Scenes, and lines; thus III. ii. 181 means Act III, Scene ii., line 181. For metrical difficulties, see Introduction, pp. xxvi-xxxiii.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The first scene serves to introduce Theseus and Hippolyta, whose wedding is, so to speak, the occasion of the action. It is for the festivities which Philostrate is to organise that Quince's play is prepared, and the Fairies have come to Athens to bless the marriage. Theseus also connects his wedding day with the affairs of the four lovers by fixing it as the day on which Hermia is to marry Demetrius. The latter part of the scene is devised with a view to explaining the relations of the lovers, and making arrangements for them to meet in the wood outside Athens.

Two points have been criticised—

(1) The exit for Egeus and Demetrius (l. 127) is weak. Theseus simply gets them off the stage, and Egeus leaves Hermia and Lysander together without anxiety, while Helena suddenly appears in Theseus' palace and disdains to answer the question "whither away?" Probably, had the play been written later and more definitely for the theatre, Lysander and Hermia would have met in the street and Helena happened to pass.

(2) Helena's action in deliberately making up her mind to betray her friend is supposed to be unpleasantly out of character, and Coleridge would like it to be part of the dream, though he admits that women are not, as a rule, strong in principle where their passions are involved. See Introduction (p. xxi) on Helena.

4. lingers: transitive, "puts off."

5. dowager: i.e. a widow whose dower or jointure was chargeable on an estate which had passed to a younger male heir.

6. withering out: the dowager herself withers, and also causes the young man's revenue not to attain its full bloom.

7. four days: see Introduction, p. xviii.

13. pert: "lively"; the word is derived from "perk" "to dress up," and influenced by *mal-apert*, "unnecessarily open."

15. companion: "fellow," always contemptuous, frequently with the epithet "scurvy" prefixed. pomp: "a procession;" in this case a wedding as contrasted with a funeral procession.

16. I woo'd thee with my sword: see Introduction, p. xiii.

19 triumph used of any public spectacle, frequently of tournaments

20. duke. the word means simply "prince" or "chief"; it is found prefixed to the names of Ajax and Hamilcar, and in the Bible is given as a title of the Edomite chiefs Chaucer uses it of Theseus.

21. Egeus: a trisyllable accented Egéus. The name originally belonged to Theseus' father

31. faining: i.e. "passionate" or "lovesick." This is the older text. Most editors read "feigning," i.e. pretended. It is true that Egeus would prefer to consider Lysander's passion insincere; but the general sense is that Lysander had succeeded owing to an unfair use of the methods calculated to appeal to sentiment.

32. stolen the impression, etc.: Lysander had surreptitiously imprinted his image on the imagination of Hermia.

33. gawds, conceits: *gawds*, from the Latin *gaudiale*, is a doublet of *jewel*, but is used always of cheap adornments; *conceits*, from Latin *concipere*, are "presents" which owe their attractiveness to being "prettily conceived."

34. knacks "knick-knacks"

35. prevailment: "influence." unhardened: continuing the metaphor of *impress*. The comparison of youth to wax is a commonplace

39. be it so "if," "suppose."

41. ancient privilege of Athens: i.e. "the right which has in the past belonged to Athenian citizens." There was a law of Solon, the great Athenian legislator, which bestowed upon fathers the right of life and death over their children. Solon belonged to the historical period and lived in 600 B.C., Theseus to the earlier mythical period, but that mattered little to Shakespeare.

45. immediately provided, etc.: "expressly devised to meet such a case." Steevens remarks, "Shakespeare is grievously suspected of having been placed, while a boy, in an attorney's office. The line before us has an undoubted smack of legal commonplace Poetry disclaims it."

46. be advis'd "take care," "consider"; the use remains in the word "ill-advised," which means "careless," not "misled by bad advice."

51. disfigure: i.e. to destroy the figure or shape of the waxen image

54. in this kind. i.e. "as a husband." wanting: the participle has nothing to agree with. Shakespeare's characters, being human, did not observe the rules of grammar in conversation.

60. how it may concern my modesty: "how it may affect my reputation for modesty."

65. to die the death: the definite article is prefixed to *death* when the reference is "death penalty."

68. blood: used for "impulse": youth, desire, and impulse would all revolt against the cloister.

69. whether "to see whether"

70. the livery of a nun here there is the usual Renaissance blend of classical and mediaeval. *Hermia* is to become one of the virgin priestesses of *Diana*, but the terms used—*nun*, *cloister*, *sister*—belong to mediaeval monasticism. The reference to the "Moon," i.e. *Diana*, as the goddess of chastity is a return to the classical world again. *Livery*: used of any distinctive dress.

73. faint: everything within the cloister is described as quiet and low-toned by comparison with the outside world. The hymns chanted by a fasting nun, without being insincere, might well be fainter in sound than the passionate songs of natural youth.

74. thrice blessed, etc.: see on II. i. 145.

75. undergo such maiden pilgrimage: "thus to pass through life as maidens." So Richard II. says "Our pilgrimage must be," i.e. "our life is still to live." Cp. *Genesis* xlvii. 9, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years."

76. earthlier happy: Shakespeare often uses double adjectives, and here he has one in which the comparative termination is added to the first limb only (it might be written "more earthly-happy"); the meaning is "happier in an earthly sense" *rose distill'd*: those who marry are compared to roses distilled for perfume, because their beauty, like the scent of the rose, is preserved in their children. Cp. Sonnet 5—

"But flowers distilled, though they with winter meet,
Leeze (lose) but their show: their substance still lives sweet."

80. virgin patent "privileges of maidenhood."

81. unto his lordship, etc.: *his*, the possessive of *he*, is antecedent to *whose*. In full the sentence would run, "to the lordship of the man to whose unwished yoke, etc." The use of the objective case without a preposition as the indirect object of the verb *to give* is confined in modern English to instances in which it follows the verb.

84. the sealing-day, etc.: a legal metaphor, the reference being to the contract of marriage between *Theseus* and *Hippolyta*.

88. he: *Ægeus*.

89. *Diana's* altar: see on II. 70, 73. Until comparatively lately the Greek gods were always known by their Latin names. *Artemis* would have been an unknown word to the audience at the Globe. protest: "take a vow of."

92. crazed: "invalid."

98. estate unto: "make over to;" the phrase is again legal, but the usual form is "estate upon."

99. deriv'd: "descended," "born."

100. possess'd: "supplied with possessions," "rich."

101. my fortunes every way, etc.: "in every respect my fortune is as good as that of *Demetrius*, if not better."

103. which is more: "what is more important."

106. I'll avouch it to his head: "I am prepared to assert it openly before his face."

110 spotted: "stained with sin," "defiled" So in *Richard II.*, "Terrible hell make war upon their spotted souls for this offence."

113. self-affairs: "business of my own." *Self* when prefixed to a substantive is usually objective, e.g. self-love, self-deception; the possessive sense is less common.

116. schooling: "directions." The word usually means "reprimand," e.g. *Hotspur* when reproved for provoking Owen Glendower says, "Well, I am schooled."

118. to fit your fancies, etc.: "to bring your inclinations into harmony with your father's will."

120 extenuate: "mitigate" Cp. the phrase "extenuating circumstances."

122. what cheer having been forced to neglect Hippolyta for a time owing to his business, Theseus, like a lover, inquires after her health

123. go along: sc. with me.

129. chance: the full phrase would be "how chances it that . . .?"

130. belike: "probably."

131. betwixt: "allow," "grant"; the word has also a secondary sense, "pour out"

132. ay me: "alas," the reading of the Quartos. The first Folio omits the words and the second substitutes *Hermia*. From a literary point of view "*Hermia*" is better, being more pathetic, but "ay me" has better authority.

135. blood. "birth."

136. O cross! too high, etc.: *cross*="vexation"; the sense is "how hard that one lover should be too highly born to become the slave of one more lowly born!"

137. misgrafted: "wrongly grafted," i.e. "in matching the young stock with too old a tree there was bad grafting."

139. stood upon: "depended on."

140 O hell 'to choose, etc.: this is *Hermia's* own case, and she is particularly emphatic, both in the preliminary exclamation and in the stress which, with the rhythm to aid her, she lays on *love*.

141. sympathy. "agreement."

143. momentary: an older form of "momentary."

145. collied: "smutted with coal," i.e. coal-black.

146 spleen: used of a sudden "fit," especially of ill-humour.

147 ere a man hath power to say, etc.: cp. *Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii. 119: "like the lightening which doth cease to be, Ere one can say it lightens." Such love is that of *Romeo* and *Juliet*.

151. edict in destiny: "a law of fate" The word *edict* is accented on the second syllable; see Introduction, p xxxii.

152. teach our trial patience: i.e. teach ourselves who are tried patience, i.e. learn patience.

154. as due to love: "as much belonging to love."

155. fancy: "love," here and elsewhere in the play.

156. a good persuasion. either "a sound belief" or "a strong argument." It is characteristic of Shakespeare and this play that

Lysander, having commended Hermia's argument, at once suggests a course which will make patience superfluous

160. respects : "regards," "looks upon."

164. forth : used for "from," "out of."

167. to do observance. the phrase occurs in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, and was probably the accepted formula for keeping May Day. The rites consisted in rising early, bathing in dew, gathering may (maying) and other flowers, and also singing. Chaucer's Emelye "song hevenysshly like an aungel," and even Milton wrote an *Ode for May Morning*. The custom is kept up at Magdalen College, Oxford, where on May morning the choir sing at sunrise on the top of the tower

170. best arrow with the golden head : Shakespeare refers to it in *Twelfth Night* as "the golden shaft." The arrow which was tipped with gold caused love, and that which was tipped with lead "slaked" it. The distinction is due to the Latin poet Ovid.

171. by the simplicity, etc. : *simplicity* = "freedom from guile"; the dove represented tenderness and constancy in love, and had been sacred to Venus from the earliest times. Doves drew Venus' chariot, as peacocks drew Juno's.

173. by that fire, etc. : Dido, queen of Carthage, loved Aeneas, one of the Trojan heroes; when he deserted her, she burnt herself on a funeral pyre. Carthage queen : proper names are frequently used as adjectives, e.g. "Tiber banks."

182. you fair : the reading of the Folio. The Quartos read "your fair," making fair an abstract substantive meaning "beauty," in which sense it is quite common; but as *fair* at the end of the line must be used personally the transition from the one substantival use to the other would be awkward.

183. lode-stars : guiding or leading stars, the metaphor being from sailing; the *lodestone* has now taken the place of lodestars. The chief lodestar was the pole star in the constellation of Ursa Minor.

184. tuneable : "tuneful"; so "changeable" = "changeoful."

186. favour : "looks"; so in the Midland dialect "to favour one's father" is "to look like him."

190. bated : "excepted."

191. translated : "transformed"; cp. III. i. 108.

200. no fault of mine : the Folios read *none*, but the little touch of pettishness is characteristic of Hermia, who is rather tired of Helena's compliments and complaints, and wishes to close the discussion.

201. none, but your beauty. i.e. "your only fault in the matter is your beauty."

207. that he hath turn'd, etc. : Hermia may not see Lysander in Athens, and so it has become hell for her.

209. Phoebe : i.e. Diana, the moon, whose watery glass is the sea.

212. still : "always."

215. *faint* : may refer either to the colour or to the scent of the primroses, or to the weariness of those who lay on the primrose-beds

216. *sweet* : Theobald altered *swell'd* to *sweet* for the sake of the rhyme, and for the same reason "strange companions" to "stranger companies"

219. *stranger* : a substantive used as an adjective

223. *food*. cp. *Richard II.*, II. 1.—

"The pleasure that some fathers feed upon
Is my strict fast—I mean my children's looks."

225. *dote* : subjunctive expressing a wish.

226. *other some* : "others"; for the use cp. Acts xvii. 18.

231. *admiring of* : in English the form of the verbal noun (originally an abstract substantive in *-ing*) and that of the present participle (originally a verbal adjective in *-ende*) are the same, though their uses are now clearly distinguished. But in Shakespeare's time there was little distinction in meaning between the phrase "a-doing" (*i e* on doing), which was naturally followed by "of," as *doing* was a noun, and the participle *doing* followed by the objective case. Uneducated people still adhere to "I am a-doing of it" in preference to "I am doing it," and in Shakespeare what we should now call a present participle is often followed by "of."

232. *holding no quantity* : *i.e.* that in reality are out of all proportion to love's estimate of them.

233. *form* : with the sense of the Latin *forma*, "beauty."

236. *nor hath Love's mind*, etc. : "there is no flavour of judgment in Love's decisions."

237. *figure* : "represent," "stand for"

240. *in game* : *i e.* for fun. Boys enjoy playing with obligations by equivocating and by such devices as saying "over the left."

242. *eyne* : Shakespeare uses the form for the rhyme. It is found in Middle English, and survives as "een" in the Scottish dialect.

245. *so* : the word balances "when," as "so" in German balances a conditional clause; the sense is "as a result."

249. *it is a dear expense* : *i e.* Demetrius' thanks are dear when they cost Helena the sacrifice of her own feelings. She will be helping Demetrius to marry Hermia, and so crossing her own love.

ACT I SCENE II.

The second scene, which introduces the play and by the device of the roll-call gives the names of all who are to take part in it, must have been even more amusing in Shakespeare's time than now; for references which commentators have difficulty in tracing were probably quite familiar to the audience. Among the group of actors Bottom plays in reality the part of a little tyrant. Quince

has to speak him fair before he will be content to take up one part only; and while Quince has all the trouble of the stage management, it is Bottom who is ready to order the actors about and make suggestions at every turn. Quince "is to entreat, request, and desire them to con their parts," but Bottom speaks in a kingly vein—"Take pains, be perfect, adieu," and it is he who ultimately dismisses the meeting

2. *you were best*: in Elizabethan English the two idioms "it were best for you" (impersonal) and "you had best" (personal) are often combined ungrammatically. So in *Richard II.*, "me rather had." generally: he means "severally." The misuse of words is in Bottom as in Dogberry a characteristic of self-importance, not, as in the case of Mrs. Quickly, of mere inconsequence

3. *scrip*: "scroll," i.e. the written list of actors

8. *grow to a point*. Bottomese for "come to the point."

9. *Marry*: a corruption of "by Mary." lamentable Comedy possibly a burlesque on the title of a play called *Cambyses*, which was called "a lamentable Tragedy mixed full of pleasant mirth"; cp. l. 17.

13. *spread yourselves*: Bottom wishes to review the strength of his company, and so invites them to stand separately.

17. *a tyrant*: King Cambyses, in whose vein Falstaff proposed to speak when enacting Henry IV., was a typical tyrant and had been so from the time of Herodotus. Herod, whom ranting actors out-Heroded, was another.

18. *gallant*: for "gallantly," the reading of the Folios.

19. *ask*: "call for."

21. *condole*: "lament", though there is no reason for supposing that Bottom misuses the word, it was evidently high-flown and had for that reason taken his fancy. Pistol is the only other Shakespearean character who employs it. to the rest: i.e. "go on to the others."

22. *my chief humour*, etc.: "I am most suited by temperament to act a tyrant." *Ercles*: the reference is probably to a play called the *Twelve Labours of Hercules*, which a player who is introduced in one of Greene's plays professes to "have terribly thundered on the stage."

23. *tear a cat*: contemporary quotations show that this was a piece of stage slang, as was also *make all split*. Hamlet when criticising the boisterous style speaks of *tearing* a passion to tatters, and *splitting* the ears of the audience. "Making all split" was probably a metaphor from a storm splitting a ship.

24. *the raging rocks*, etc.: probably a burlesque misrendering of some passage in the *Twelve Labours of Hercules*. Whether the last four lines were ever intended to have any sense is doubtful; the reference was probably to some day whose sun (Phoebus' car) should see a revolution of Fate, owing to the hero's escape from prison. "The raging rocks," judging from the punctuation of the

old copies, belonged to an earlier sentence. For the use of *make*, i.e. "make the fortune of," cp IV. ii. 17.

34. bellows-mender: it is more probable that Flute mended organs than that he mended the ordinary utensils of the fireside. There would then be more point in his squeaking in the part of Thisbe.

37. wandering knight "a knight errant."

39. play a woman: on the Elizabethan stage women's parts were acted by boys. Thus in the little interlude which was got up for Christopher Sly the Tinker the lady was acted by a page (*Taming of the Shrew*), and Rosalind in the epilogue to *As You Like It* would be ready to kiss some of the men in the audience, if she were a woman. Cleopatra also refers to the representation of her life on the stage when some squeaking Cleopatra shall *boy* her greatness.

41. mask: masks were commonly worn by ladies of the Elizabethan period, and the play would be acted in Elizabethan costume. Thus Quince would be able to play the whole part with his face hidden.

44. Thisne: the form may indicate an attempt on the part of Bottom to squeak the name Thisbe through his nose; or he may be speaking as Pyramus and using a pet name, to which he answers as Thisbe. Some editors assume that the compositor blundered, and others would make *Thisne* equivalent to "a thissens," the Midland dialect for "in this way."

52. Thisby's mother: this and the other parts were omitted subsequently, and Wall, Moonshine, and the Prologue substituted.

57. fitted: "fitted with a suitable cast."

71. aggravate: Bottom means "mitigate"; the joke occurs again in *Henry IV.*, where, after a furious display of swaggering on the part of Pistol, Mrs. Quickly begs him to "aggravate his choler."

72. you: a colloquial use of the dative. an't were: "as if it were."

75. proper: "handsome."

81. discharge: "perform." your. equivalent in meaning to "which you know."

82. orange-tawny. "dark yellow." purple-in-grain: "fast red." The best red dyes were made from grains, i.e. dried insects, which were obtained from ever-green oaks.

83. French-crown-colour: i.e. the colour of a piece of gold money, probably pale yellow.

84. French crowns: the gay life lived by Frenchmen was supposed to make them prematurely bald.

91. draw a bill: "write out a list."

94. obscenely: apparently "seemly," for which word it is used in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Some editors suggest that the word stands for "obscurely."

96. hold or cut bow-strings: a proverbial expression from archery. Apparently to cut an archer's bowstring was to disqualify and disgrace him as an archer, so that the phrase would mean "keep your words or be disgraced."

ACT II. SCENE I

The second act begins the dream. Theseus, the sharp Athenian law, and the unrelenting Egeus have vanished—there is no human motive or passion depicted but love, and even that is romantic and unreal. Oberon and Puck control the action, and Titania gives the atmosphere.

The beauty of the pictures which are blended together—the English village, the Indian night, the flower world of fairy-land—is rather to be felt than spoken of. The humour of the scene, which depends on the contrast between the tiny size of the fairies and the magnificence of their bearing in the terrible quarrel which caused such dire effects in Nature and made the elves creep into acorn cups and hide for fear, is lost when the play is put on the stage.

The scene, however, has another aspect which may be discussed without irreverence. It fills its place in the general action of the play, and shows the business-like skill of its author. The first sixty lines serve to prove we are in fairy-land, to describe Robin Goodfellow, and to prepare for the arrival of the king and queen and for their quarrel. The appearance of Demetrius and Helena while Puck is fetching the pansy is the circumstance which leads to all the further complications of the dream. Helena's pursuit of her lover is a typical romantic incident, and in keeping with the situation. She is not to be called immodest.

3. *thorough*: the Anglo-Saxon is *thurh*, so that *thorough* is a stage on the way to *through*. It is, however, retained as an adjective.

4. *pale*: "enclosure," like the Irish "Pale."

7. *moon's*: for the metre see Introduction, p. xxxii. *sphere*. according to the old belief the earth was the centre of the universe, and the planets, including the sun and moon, revolved round it, each fixed on the surface of a hollow transparent sphere. All the spheres received their rotatory motion from an outer opaque sphere called the *primum mobile*.

9. *dew her orbs*: the circles of long grass sometimes seen in fields were called "fairy rings." They were supposed to be made by the fairies, who watered the circle carefully with dew, and used them for dancing. The latest scientific explanation is that they are caused by fungi which act as fertilisers.

10. *pensioners*: "attendants." Queen Elizabeth had a band of military courtiers styled "pensioners," and there is probably a reference to their uniform.

12. *favours*: "love tokens."

13. *savours*: "scent"

16. *lob*: "clown" Puck was of humbler origin than the fairies, for they came from Romance and he from Folk-lore. He, therefore, had in his appearance something uncouth and countryfied. He was known as Lob-lie-by-the-Fire and the Lubber fiend.

20. passing fell: in prose "exceedingly angry."

23. changeling: there was a common superstition that fairies stole beautiful children and left elves in their place.

25. trace: "wander through."

29. starlight sheen: *starlight* is an adjective and *sheen* a substantive meaning "brightness."

30. but they do square: "without quarrelling."

33. shrewd: literally "cursed," and so "causing trouble," "mischievous."

35. villagery: a collective noun formed from "villager."

36. skim: plural because the subject in sense is *you*. If the cream did not rise, Robin Goodfellow was supposed to have purloined it; and similarly, if the butter refused to break or the beer to ferment, he was held responsible. On the other hand, if you found more corn ground in the quern (handmill) in the morning than you remembered to have ground yourself, Robin Goodfellow had been at work during the night.

37. bootless: "without result."

38. barm: properly "yeast"; here the yeasty froth on the top of the barrel which showed that the beer was fermenting.

40. Hobgoblin: Hob is an endearing diminutive of Robert, intended to soften down the *goblin* (Scandinavian *kobold*), which was less complimentary. Puck: the word is not in the first instance a proper name, but means "sprite." It is connected with "pyxie" and "spook."

41. their: the pronoun refers back to *those*.

44. I jest to Oberon: this is the skilful device by which Robin Goodfellow, the country goblin, is fitted into the fairy world: he acts as clown or jester to Oberon.

47. gossip's bowl: *gossip* meant "related in God," i.e. godfather or godmother, then "crony"; like the Scotch *kimmer* and *cummer* (*commère*), it was either masculine or feminine, usually the latter. As a verb its meaning is derived from an observed propensity in female cronies to talk scandal. A gossip's bowl was technically a bowl of spiced ale with roasted crab-apples in it, so that the phrase has to do double duty.

50. dewlap: the loose skin on the necks of cattle.

51. aunt: "an old woman." "Uncle" is used of old negroes—Uncle Tom or Uncle Remus, or of old Boers—Ohm Paul; the Fool habitually addresses Lear as "uncle."

52. three-foot stool: "three-legged stool."

54. tailor: Johnson says he remembers having heard the expression in his youth. Tailors did not use chairs, but sat cross-legged on their tables; but the reference is probably to the bad repute of tailors, which made the name a mild equivalent for "the deuce." Kent (in *Lear*) when enraged by the tawdry and feeble Oswald says "Nature disclaims in thee, a tailor made thee," and Hotspur to express his utter contempt for music says that to sing is the "next way to turn tailor."

55 quire from Lat *chorus* On this occasion there was a chorus of laughers

56. waxen. "grow," "increase." The *-en* is the Middle English plural. neeze: another form of sneeze, A S. *fneosan*; this form, which is found in Job, like the German *niesen*, has lost the spirant

57. wasted: "passed"; so *wasted time*, "the past."

64. I know when: "I know of times when."

66. Corin: like Lycidas or Strephon, one of the conventional classical names for the shepherds of pastoral poetry, as Phyllida or Phyllis was the accepted name of a shepherdess.

67. pipes of corn: shepherds made their pipes of oat straws; cp. *Love's Labour's Lost* (end), "When shepherds pipe on oaten straws"

69. steep some editions read *steppe*, but no instance of the word can be found as early as the sixteenth century. The reference in "steep," if correct, is to the Himalayas, called the "Indian Mount"

70. bouncing: "blustering," "swaggering"

71. buskin'd: the buskin was a long boot with a thick sole worn by Greek tragic actors and persons engaged in heroic pursuits such as hunting

75. glance at my credit, etc.: i.e. insinuate an attack upon my good name in connection with Hippolyta.

78. Perigenia: for this and the other names see Introduction, pp. xv, xvi.

82 spring. "beginning"; cp. *dayspring* for the "beginning of day."

84 paved: "with a pebbly bottom."

85. beached: "formed by a beach"; the Elizabethan idiom often uses substantives as verbs. margent: a parallel form of *margin* which a more accurate knowledge of Latin among authors killed off.

86. ringlets: "fairy rings." Editors complain that they are not seen on the beach; but the fairies presumably chose the beach not merely because there was music to be had, but because the tide would wash out their traces

88. piping to us in vain: "we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced," St. Matthew xi. 17, St. Luke vii. 32

90. contagious: "pestilential." 91. pelting "petty."

92. continents: i.e. the banks which contain them

94. lost his sweat: "wasted his labour"

95. beard. the long prickles which grow on the ears of rye and barley. Tennyson calls the barley "bearded."

97. murrian: a substantive used as an adjective; the commoner form is *murrain*, as in Exodus. The word is derived from Latin *mori*, "to die," and means "cattle disease."

98. nine men's morris. this was a game for two players, each of whom had nine pieces or men which he placed alternately with his adversary on the board and then moved. The board, which was frequently cut in the turf, consisted of three concentric squares with lines drawn to join the adjacent corners and the middle points

of the sides. A player who succeeded in getting three men in a row was entitled to remove one of his adversary's men and place it in the centre square, which was called the pound. The game continued till one player lost all his men. The word *morrice* (moorish) means a dance, and being a familiar word replaced *merrils*, i.e. "pieces," the original name of the game. Shakespeare here is referring to the turf board, which in wet weather would fill with mud.

99. *quain*, mazes: figures traced on the village green for the purpose of country dancing. *wanton*: probably a reference to the rank growth of the grass due to the rain.

101. *human mortals*: to the fairies men were simply one class of mortal things. *want*: "are without"; it is still so used in Lowland Scotch.

103. *floods*: "tides."

104. *washes*: "moistens"; the idea is that the moon enjoyed the carols in which she was addressed; and as no carols were sung and she controlled the water, she grew pale and watery and caused a "green Yule," which country people say "makes a fat churchyard."

105. *rheumatic*. any form of illness produced by flowing or flux (Greek, *ρευμα*), i.e. colds and other similar complaints as well as rheumatism.

106. *distemperature*. "upset in the weather."

109. *Hiems*: personified "Winter," from the Latin.

112. *childing*: "productive." 113. *mazed*: "amazed"

114. *increase*: "produce," as in Psalm lxxxv. 12.

116. *debate*: "quarrelling." 117. *original*: "origin."

121. *henchman*: "page"; originally "a groom," from *hengst*, "a stallion."

122. *the fairy land*, etc.: "I will not part with him though you give me all fairy land."

123. *votaress of my order*. i.e. one who had joined the fairy sisterhood; *votaress* = "one who has taken a vow." Titania was originally Diana, and so it was natural to speak of her as presiding over a sisterhood.

124. *spiced*: "fragrant with spices."

127. *the embarked traders*: *traders* = "merchantmen"; the transposition of the adjective is common; cp. *Richard II.*, "a happy gentleman in blood and lineaments."

137. *round*: "dance."

143. *thou shalt not*: *sc* go; this omission of the verb of motion is a common idiom in Old English and in German.

145-165. *my gentle Puck*... *love-in-idleness*: there is evidently an allegory here, and the key to it has been lost, and much ingenuity wasted. That ll. 155 ff. contain an allusion to Queen Elizabeth, who has already been complimented on her virginity, l. i. 74, is admitted on all hands. It has been pointed out that the words *that very time* suggest a definite reference. But as Elizabeth was at least

sixty at the time when the play was acted, the reference must be to some temptation to marry which she resisted in her earlier life

What the reference is must depend on the interpretation of ll. 150 ff. There are two theories, neither wholly satisfactory. (a) It has been suggested that the Mermaid was Mary Queen of Scots. Mary was dangerously fascinating; she came from over the sea, and had been married to the Dauphin; moreover she complained of a caricature, still extant, which represented her as a mermaid, and certain English noblemen—the Northern Earls and the Duke of Norfolk—aspired beyond their spheres and fell, because they madly supported her. On this view the reference is to the projected alliance between Elizabeth and the Duke of Anjou, which was intended to frustrate Norfolk's plot and detach French support from Mary. It was never more than a political move, and as such was successful. These events belong to 1572. (b) Another view is that there is a reference to the festivities at Kenilworth when Leicester entertained Elizabeth there in 1575. Shakespeare as a boy may well have gone to Kenilworth and seen the pageants, which we know from contemporary accounts included a mermaid swimming on the pond and a display of fireworks. The visit also was the crisis in Elizabeth's relations with Leicester.

In spite of the ridicule that has been heaped upon the former view owing to the fatuity of Bishop Warburton who first suggested it, if either is to be adopted, this seems preferable. An allusion to public affairs would be in far better taste, and far more likely to be understood by the audience and passed by the Queen, than a comment on Elizabeth's private relations with Leicester. As an allusion to Mary it is not so complimentary as to offend Elizabeth, or so uncomplimentary as to violate the principle "*de mortuis*" or offend James. Moreover the details of the pageant at Kenilworth were not likely to be remembered twenty years later, and it is not in Shakespeare's manner to refer in such an elaborate way to his private reminiscences, which would not be shared by the audience. Finally, if the "fair vestal" refers to one queen, the "mermaid," if the emblem refers to anything, is more likely to refer to Elizabeth's rival than to a casual figure in one of the pageants so common at the time.

146. *since* : "when."

148. *breath* : *breath* and *air* are used frequently of songs; cp. I. i. 183.

154. *certain* : "sure."

160. *votaress* : Elizabeth was vowed to chastity.

161. *fancy-free* : "free from love"; cp. I. i. 155.

163. *little western flower* : the pansy, which was also called love-in-idleness. The flower does not belong to the allegory, which serves only to interest us in it, but exists on its own merits as an important stage property.

164. *before milk-white*, etc : there is no such legend of the pansy, though another purple flower bears the name of "love-lies-

bleeding" Ovid describes how the mulberry, before white, was reddened by Pyramus' blood, this being the change which enabled him to include the story of Pyramus and Thisbe in the *Metamorphoses* ("Transformations").

168 or . or . either . . or.

171. leviathan: "the whale"; the word means "monster," and in the Book of Job serves for the crocodile.

172. I'll put a girdle, etc. . I will be round the world and back.

179 soul of love: "the intensest love"; the phrase "soul of music" is similarly used.

189. wode . "mad"

192. adamant: "lodestone."

193. iron: typical of hardness, whereas *steel* stands for constancy.

205 worser: the double comparative is emphatic.

206 place of high respect with me: "a place which I value highly."

211. impeach: "lay open to attack."

214. opportunity of night: "chance night affords."

215 ill counsel of a desert place. i.e. the fact that the place is deserted may suggest evil designs to Demetrius.

217. your virtue is my privilege: i.e. "Demetrius for Helena has the power (virtue) of turning night into day, and peopling the desert, so that a special arrangement (privilege) has been made in her favour"; in the same way, owing to Lysander's graces, Athens, where Hermia cannot see him, is changed for her from heaven to hell. for that "because."

221. in my respect: "in my eyes"

228. Apollo flies, etc.: Apollo loved the nymph Daphne and pursued her, and she was turned into a laurel. The story is from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

229. griffin: "an eagle." Griffins or gryphons inhabited northern Russia and Asia, where Sir John Mandeville imagined he had seen some; they guarded supplies of gold. From the simple classical eagle they grew into heraldic monsters half lion, half eagle, but Shakespeare can hardly mean more than an eagle here.

232. stay: "wait for." questions: "talk."

233. do not believe but: "be sure that."

235. in the temple: classical for "in church."

241. to die upon: "through dying by."

246. I know, etc.: for the metre of this line and l. 248 see Introduction, p xxx.

247. oxlips: a large kind of cowslip grows: the verb agrees with the nearer of the two subjects

248. woodbine. "honeysuckle." Honeysuckle is often used for arbours, and no kind of convolvulus is strong enough for this context; cp. IV 1. 39.

249 musk-roses a scented rose which in shape and colour seems to have resembled the *rosa arvensis*, the later blooming of the two common dog-roses eglantine: "sweetbriar."

250 sometime of: "at times during."

252. **throws** · “sheds”, the snake’s slough was smooth and spotted like enamel. Shakespeare uses the word also of the stones in the brook bottom.

253. **weed** “garment.”

254. **streak** · “stroke,” “touch.”

263. **fond on** · “doting on”; cp. *Twelfth Night*, “I poor monster fond as much on him, as she mistaken seems to dote on me”

264. **ere the first cock crow** : spirits and fairies withdrew at cock-crow. The Ghost in *Hamlet* “started like a guilty thing” when the cock crew, and at Christmas the cock crowed all night long, so that everyone was safe.

ACT II. SCENE II.

The scene here is the bank described by Oberon at the close of the preceding scene. The actual bank would be the back-scene, so that Titania could sleep without being noticed by Lysander and Hermia. From this point onwards the doings of the lovers, though easily intelligible on the stage, are not so easy to follow from the text. Hermia and Lysander had lost themselves in the wood, and in their wanderings would naturally choose so beautiful a spot to sleep. Hermia’s modesty in lying down so far from her lover had two disastrous results for her : in the first place, it confirmed Puck in the belief that Hermia and Lysander were the couple referred to by Oberon ; and, secondly, it made it possible for Helena to rouse Lysander without seeing Hermia.

Since Helena and Demetrius had been seen by Oberon, Demetrius efforts to get away and Helena’s to keep with him had increased in vehemence, so that both were now running, and Helena was out of breath and frightened as well. It was therefore natural that, when she could pursue Demetrius no more and found Lysander asleep, she should wake him. It was equally natural that when Lysander protested his love to her, Helena, whose confidence in her own beauty had been rudely shaken, should try to escape, in the belief that Lysander intended to insult her. That Lysander’s desertion should affect Hermia’s dreams and cause her to wake is true both to life and to art.

1. **roundel** : “dance” ; elsewhere a song with a refrain.

2. **third part of a minute** : time in fairy-land was proportioned to the size of the inhabitants.

3. **cankers** : a worm that destroys flowers.

4. **re-re-mice** : “bats.”

7. **quaint** : “fine.”

8. **offices** : “duties.”

9. **double** : “forked.”

11. **newts and blind-worms** : newts and slow-worms were considered poisonous.

13. **Philomel** : classical for “nightingale”

30. **ounce** · “lynx.”

31. **pard** : “leopard.”

32. in thy eye that, etc. "which shall appear in thy sight."

36. troth. "truth"

45. take the sense, etc : "do not misunderstand my innocent words."

49. interchanged : the reading of the Quartos The Folios read "interchanged" : the "exchange of hearts" by means of a kiss or oath was one of the commonest conceits of Elizabethan love poetry.

52. I do not lie : referring to Hermia's words, l. 44. The pun is common, and in an elaborate form occurs in *Hamlet* in the dialogue between the hero and the grave-digger.

54. much beshrew my manners. *beshrew* is a mild form of the verb "curse," so that Hermia is expressing a wish "that some serious evil may befall her manners and pride if she meant to say her lover was lying."

57. in human modesty. . . distant : the sense is clear, "such separation" (i.e. let there be such separation) is a request, and is taken up again by "so far be distant." As Hermia speaks she moves away from Lysander, and as there is action there is no need of syntax. By line 60 Hermia has chosen her position. *Human* presumably refers to the standard in vogue among men, and is explained by what follows. To Titania's wooing of Bottom human standards do not apply.

61. alter : subjunctive expressing a wish.

65. with half that wish, etc. : Hermia will not take all the rest that sleep can give, half shall be Lysander's.

68. approve : "test." 79. owe : "possess."

80. let love forbid, etc. : i.e. "let love keep you awake."

86. darkling : "in the dark"; cp. *Twelfth Night*, "so out went the candle and we were left darkling."

88. fond : the word in Shakespeare has the sense of "foolish" as well as that of "loving"; it generally means "made foolish by love."

91. attractive : in the literal sense "that can draw." It is Helena's favourite figure : cp. I. i. 183 ; II. i. 192.

96. therefore no marvel . . . thus : "therefore it is not wonderful if Demetrius thus runs away from the sight of me as if I were a monster"

99. compare. "draw comparisons," sc. between my eyes and Hermia's. sphery : "like stars," "heavenly."

114 a raven for a dove : Hermia was dark and Helena fair ; Hermia also had a temper, while Helena was mild and clinging, or, as she expresses it herself, "simple and fond." The contrast between ravens and doves was usual. Orsino in *Twelfth Night* calls Olivia "a raven's heart within a dove."

115. the will of man, etc. : Aristotle's philosophy held the field in Shakespeare's day, and he refers to it in *Troilus and Cressida*. One of Aristotle's doctrines was that young men were bad students of moral philosophy because they lived by their passions and not by reason, so that they would often fall in love several times in the

same day. The humour of the situation is that Lysander eloquently declares in favour of reason, and is sure that he has reached the highest point of human wisdom just when he has been bewitched, much as a drunken man protests that he is sober.

118 ripe: "have not grown ripe" *Ripe* is a verb, and the present tense is used of an action begun in the past and continued in the present

119. touching: "having reached," the participle has no construction. skill: "wisdom."

121. o'erlook: "read," not merely "glance through."

126. nor never: the double negative is emphatic.

127. deserve: "earn." 128. flout: "mock."

129. sooth: "truth." 132. gentleness: "good breeding."

140. of those they did deceive. "by those whom they (the heresies) deceived." New converts are always the most zealous, e.g. St Paul.

143. address: "direct," imperative.

150. prey "preying," i.e. "devouring."

153. an if *and* *an* were both used to mean "if" and also to strengthen "if."

154 of all loves: "in the name of all loves."

ACT III. SCENE I.

The third act brings both the complications due to the love juice to a crisis. The lovers are gone, but Titania is still sleeping on her bank when the clowns select the green in front of it for their play. Quince is evidently the poet, but he allows himself to be bullied into various changes in the play by the unimaginative Bottom, whose desire to teach rather than to please is so strong that he is prepared to destroy the illusion of the play by explaining everything. The play in fact is much changed since Quince drew the cast, and seems to have undergone further changes later, for what is rehearsed here is not what is acted, and the prologue eventually delivered by Quince is neither in eight and six nor in eight and eight. This is natural enough; and if it were not the gain is great, for the same lines are not heard twice and the lines rehearsed here are carefully suited to their context. Bottom's cue is "horse that yet would never tire"; to answer it he comes out of the tiring-house "an ass most strangely tired," and protests that if he were beautiful he was Thisbe's only, just when he has been translated and is about to inspire a passion in the fairy queen.

Shakespeare's perfect taste is nowhere better illustrated than in his treatment of the loves of Titania and Bottom. The full humour of the contrast is obtained, but there is nothing unpleasing. Bottom being without imagination and humour takes everything for granted; to him it is quite natural that he should be so loved. Titania on the other hand, though compact of imagination, has not human

passions, and loves in an etherealised platonic fashion which does not harm her dignity.

4. tiring-house : "dressing-room." in action : i.e. they will not merely recite over their parts, but put in all the action.

12. by 'r lakin : "by our Lady," i.e. the Virgin; *ladykin* is a diminutive of *lady*. parlous . a corruption of "perilous."

13. when all is done : "after all"

22. eight and six : i.e. in lines of eight and six syllables alternately, which was the ordinary ballad metre :—

For With'rington needs must I wail
As one in doleful dumps,
For when his legs were smitten off
He fought upon his stumps.

23. eight and eight : another common ballad metre :—

King Stephen was a worthy peer,
His breeches cost him but a crown;
He held them sixpence all too dear,
With that he called the tailor lown.

Bottom corrects merely for the pleasure of correcting.

38. my life for yours : an encouraging formula; the speaker is prepared to guarantee the ladies' safety with his life. it were pity of my life : "it would be a bad thing for me"; we still say "bless my life" as well as "bless me."

50. great chamber . i.e. the state room of the palace.

54. present : "represent."

61. loam : "mortar," strictly a mixture of clay and sand; *loam* and *lime* are kindred words. rough-cast : a mixture of lime and pebbles with which walls are sometimes faced.

65. rehearse : "go through."

67. cue : the tail end of a speech, which is the signal for a new actor to enter. Cp. l. 90.

68. hempen home-spuns : cloth made from hemp and spun at home would be particularly coarse. *Homespun* was used of people who had not acquired polish in the world.

70. toward : "in preparation."

73. Thisby, the flowers, etc . the line probably stood in Quince's acting copy, "Thisby, the flowers have odours,—savours sweet" But Quince only corrected the one mistake. Sheridan adopted the joke for Mrs. Malaprop : "Caparisons are odorous."

79. a stranger Pyramus, etc. : Puck's line fits on to Bottom's and refers to the form in which Pyramus will re-appear. Capping verses was a regular practice of the time; cp. the famous lines—

Raleigh : Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall.

Elizabeth : If thy mind fail thee, do not climb at all.

or in *King John*—

Austria : Do so, King Philip, hang no more in doubt.

Bastard : Hang nothing but a calfskin, most sweet lout.

85. most briskly juvenal, etc. "briskly," "juvenal" (i.e. youth), "eke" were all affected words, and only occur in the mouths of characters like Don Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost* and Pistol. Jew: apparently used with a reference to jewel.

96. about a round: "a dance,"

99. sometime a fire: i.e. "Will-of-the-wisp."

106. you see an ass-head of your own, do you? a vulgar retort used when someone noticed an insignificant peculiarity in a neighbour's dress or appearance. The implication was that the observer had found a mare's nest and was an ass himself. The point of the expression is obvious in the context.

108. translated: "transformed."

114. ousel cock. "blackbird."

117. little quill. "shrill note."

120. plain-song: a simple form of Church music, without much harmony or counterpoint. The cuckoo has only two notes

121. whose note, etc.: the cuckoo was supposed to mock married men by making insinuations against their wives. On points of this kind no one could be certain.

123. set his wit: "oppose his wit." foolish. the cuckoo was always considered silly, possibly because it does not rear its young itself.

129. thy fair virtue's force: "the power of thy beauty."

132. reason and love: there was a Latin proverb "hardly may a god love and be wise."

135. gleek: "jest."

143. the summer still, etc.: "the summer always acknowledges my sovereignty."

154. apricocks: as the original form was *praecoquus*, this is older than *apricot*, where the termination is affected by the Italian *cotto*, as in *terra cotta*. The word has no connection with *apricus*, "sunny," though the false derivation has affected its form. dewberries: "dewberry" is the name now given to the dwarf trailing blackberry; but it is supposed that Shakespeare used the word in the sense of "gooseberry," a usage found in some dialects. The summer of the Dream attends on Titania, so that all its resources from spring flowers to summer fruits are at her disposal.

159. have: of motion, "to bring."

167. I cry your worships mercy: i.e. "I beg your pardon."

170. I shall desire you of more acquaintance: "I shall be your suitor for more acquaintance." *Of* = "in the matter of."

171. if I cut my finger: cobwebs were supposed to stop bleeding.

174. Squash: the name given to small peapods; cp. *Twelfth Night*, "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy; as a squash is before it is a peascod."

179. patience: "what you have endured."

186. when she weeps: the moon was supposed to cause the dew.

187. enforced. "violated."

188. tie up my love's tongue: this was a common expression and survives in the form "tongue-tied" Titania was perhaps vaguely conscious, in spite of her infatuation, that Bottom was more lovable when he was silent.

ACT III. SCENE II.

The second scene is devoted to the affairs of the lovers. Oberon and Puck control the action throughout, and assist as unseen spectators. Neither is in fact visible in his own shape to human eyes throughout the play. Towards the close, as day is dawning, Oberon withdraws to release Titania, while Puck concludes the scene as Will-of-the-wisp in the darkness that he has created to anticipate the dawn.

Hermia in her pursuit of Lysander had found Demetrius, whom she accused of murdering Lysander. The extreme bitterness of her tongue must have caused him to look back with regret on the discarded Helena, and prepared his mind for the change even before he slept. At this point Oberon applies the love-juice to his eyes, and Puck fetches Helena, who, transformed from the iron to the lodestone, is now drawing Lysander after her. When Demetrius wakes and loves Helena, the original position is reversed; for Demetrius and Lysander both love Helena, and when Hermia appears she finds herself deserted.

The situation gradually resolves itself into two single combats: Demetrius and Lysander prepare to fight for Helena, while Hermia is anxious to revenge herself upon Helena for the loss of Lysander. Hermia quiets first, for she has suffered most, and has behaved worse to Helena than Helena did to her under the same circumstances; she does not seriously attempt the pursuit when the latter runs away, being more anxious to protect Lysander. Lysander and Demetrius wear themselves out chasing Puck through the dark; so that Puck, though he naturally prefers to mislead wanderers, can bring the four lovers together. One after the other they drop down and sleep—Lysander and Demetrius still threatening each other; Helena, who alone has not slept, weary and saddened by the scorn that has been heaped upon her; Hermia anxious only for Lysander's safety. Puck then anoints Lysander's eyes, and all will be well

3. in extremity: "to the last extreme."

5. night-rule: "nightly behaviour," *i.e.* a state of affairs that *rules* at night. Some editors connect *rule* with *revel*, written *revel*.

7. close: "shut in"

9. patches: "clowns." rude mechanicals. "rough artisans."

13. sort: "company."

17. noll: a vulgar word for head, "noddle."

19. mimic: "player."

21. russet-pated choughs : "jackdaws with grey heads." *Russet* is used of any dull grey or brown colour. sort : "company."

25 at our stamp: the dancing of the fairies rocked the ground, op. IV. i 83.

26 he : "this one," i.e. "another."

27. their sense thus weak, lost, etc. : the substantive and participle stand for a substantival clause, "the fact that they had lost what little sense they had . . . made inanimate things begin to hurt them."

30. some sleeves, some hats, etc. : in full, "some briars catch sleeves and some hats, for when men yield they are at the mercy of everything."

36. latch'd : "smeared"; *latch* means "drop upon" and is the causative form of *leak*.

41. stand close. "keep out of sight"; *close* means "covered"

44. breath : "words." 45. should : "ought to."

48. plunge in the deep. "plunge right in."

54. and so displease . . . Antipodes : the appearance of Phoebe the moon on the other side of the world, where her brother Phoebus the sun was producing noonday, might disconcert him. *Antipodes* the people who live on the other side of the world.

57. dead. "deadly."

61. Venus : the planet, with a reference also to the goddess.

62. what's this to my Lysander : "what has this to do with my Lysander?" The same use of *to* is found in the phrase "*to* the purpose"

67. be never number'd, etc. : a reference to the curse upon Cain, Genesis iv. 12.

70. touch : "achievement."

71. worm : "serpent"; the peasant who brings Cleopatra the asp wishes her "joy of the worm."

72. doubler : cp. II. ii. 9. Probably *Hermia* implies also that *Demetrius* was treacherous and a liar.

74. on a mispris'd mood : "under a mistaken idea"

78 therefore. "for that."

85. for debt, etc. : the bankrupt sleep is indebted to sorrow (i.e. sorrow can claim relief from sleep), and is now prepared to pay a fraction if he is given time. There could hardly be a better instance than this passage to show that *his* is the old possessive of *it*.

90. misprision : a Romance equivalent for *mistake*, meaning "misunderstanding." *Mistake*, the native word, has now driven it from the field.

92. then fate o'errules, etc. : Puck excuses himself by pointing out that, if he is responsible in this case for a true-love turning false, the overruling of fate is responsible for the same thing in a million cases out of a million and one.

93. confounding oath on oath : "violating one oath after another."

96. fancy-sick : "love-sick." cheer : "tace," from old French *chère*, Latin *cara*, Greek *kápa*, "head."

97. with sighs of love, etc. : each sigh was supposed to cost a drop of life-blood. costs · assimilated to the number of *love*

99. against she do appear : "in readiness for her appearance."

101. Tartar : *i.e.* Parthian. The Parthians were famous horse-archers, and could shoot backwards as their horses galloped off. Hence the phrase "Parthian shaft."

113. fee : "payment"

114. fond pageant . "foolish spectacle"

119 alone : "unrivalled"; *only* is similarly used to mean "one and only," *e.g.* "your only jigmaker."

121. preposterously : Shakespeare uses the word as a rule in its accurate sense, "hind part before," *i.e.* "perversely"

124 vows so born · absolute construction, "when vows are so born."

127. badge an allusion to the *badges* worn by servants as part of their livery. The vows are Helena's true servants, and their badge Lysander's tears.

128. advance . "display," often used of banners.

129. when truth kills truth, etc. : the fray is devilish because truth is slain, and holy because truth is victorious.

131. nothing weigh . *i.e.* there will be nothing to determine the balance, which will therefore be useless.

133 tales : "idle tales," "fiction."

137. O Helen : notice Demetrius' cue for awaking.

141. Taurus a mountain range in Asia Minor.

142. turns to a crow : "seems as black as a crow." Demetrius is more extravagant if less maudlin than Lysander

144. princess of pure white : so Troilus is called the "*prince of chivalry*"; *prince* means "chief," "first." seal of bliss : Helena would plight the troth which would be Demetrius' bliss by giving her hand.

146. to set against me : "attack me."

150. in souls : "heartily."

153. superpraise my parts . "overpraise my gifts."

157. trim : "pretty," often used by Shakespeare ironically

160. extort : in the literal sense "wring out."

169. I will none : "I will have nothing to do with her."

171. to her : "with her"; *zu* is similarly used in German

175. aby : "pay for"; *aby* is often confused with *abide*, "wait for," in the texts.

188. oes : "orbs"; so the circular Globe Theatre is called "a wooden O."

194 in spite of me : *i.e.* "to spite me."

195. injurious : "insulting."

197. bait : "worry," used of worrying bears and bulls with dogs.

202. childhood : an adjective.

203. artificial : "skilled in art," active ; not, as now, passive

205. sampler : a woolwork picture, such as may still be seen in cottages. Samplers contained fancy designs, flowers, and alphabets as well as pictures.

208. incorporate "made into one body"

213. two of the first . i.e. "two bodies." In a description of a coat of arms the tincture of the field (background) is always mentioned first; if any of the charges happen to be of the same colour, that colour is referred to as "the first," e.g. argent, a chevron azure, on a chief gules, a lion of the first passant guardant, i.e. a lion argent. Thus, although Shakespeare does not use *first* in the heraldic sense, the phrase has a heraldic sound. coats when a man married an heiress, he impaled her arms, i.e. his shield was divided vertically between his arms and hers, but the coat belonged to husband and wife as one person, and there was as a rule only one crest.

215. rent. an older form of *rend*.

225. even but now a double phrase, used for emphasis, "only a moment ago."

232. in grace : "in favour"

237. persever : the stress is on the middle syllable

238. make mouths upon : "make faces at."

239. hold . . up : "keep up."

242. argument : "subject," i.e. of the chronicle referred to two lines before.

247. sweet, do not scorn her so : Hermia adopts Helena's view that Lysander is jesting.

248. entreat : "gain her request."

257. No, no, sir : this is the reading of the Folio, the Quarto gives "No, no, he'll," in which case the line must be assumed to be incomplete. The sense of "No, no, sir" must be, "You will not take me in."

258. seem to break loose, etc. : Demetrius implies that Lysander's attempts to break loose and his chafing, as if he were anxious to come on, is all pretence.

259. tame man . i.e. "coward" go . "be off," like the vulgar "get out."

260. burr : the fruit of the burdock, a prickly ball which is apt to stick to anything that comes in its way.

268. a weak bond : i.e. Hermia's arms

272. what news : "what has happened"

274. erewhile : "but now."

282. canker-blossom : Helena is a canker, a blight that has destroyed the flower of Lysander's love for Hermia.

286. touch : "feeling." 288. puppet : "doll."

290 compare : "comparisons." 291. urg'd : "laid stress on."

296. painted maypole : maypoles were frequently painted. Stubbes, a Puritan, remarks, "oxen draw home this Maypole (a stinking Idol rather), which is bound round about with strings from top to bottom, and sometimes painted with variable colours." The reference in "painted" is to Helena's beautiful pink and white complexion. Cp. *Twelfth Night*, "Beauty truly blent, whose red and white Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on,"

300. curst. "ill-tempered"; it is particularly used of shrews and scolds.

302 right "true." 307. evermore: "always."

314 so you will let me quiet go "if you will let me go peace fully"

323. shrewd. "malicious"

324. vixen: "she-fox," "a bad-tempered woman"; the word is a feminine of fox, like the German *fuchsin*, and is derived from A.S. *fiæn*.

329 minimus. "small creature"; the word *minim* is used technically in medicine of the smallest measure, $\frac{1}{160}$ of a drachm. knot-grass. a plant which was supposed to hinder the growth of children and animals.

330. bead. beads were black as well as small

333. intend "put forward," "display."

338. cheek by jole: *jole* = *jowl*, a form of the word *jaw*, so that *cheek by jole* means "side by side."

339. coil. "trouble." long of you. "owing to you."

347. shadows: "spirits." The fairy king at one time was Pluto, king of the Lower World or Shades. Among primitive races all supernatural beings which are not gods are either spirits of the dead or nature-spirits; the fairies, though they belonged properly to the latter class, had some of the traits of the former.

352. it so did sort: "it turned out so"

356. welkin. "sky"; A.S. *wolcen*, "cloud"

357. Acheron: a river of the Lower World. The rivers of the Lower World were so sluggish that they were often spoken of as if they were lakes or marshes. Acheron in Shakespeare is almost always a lake or pit

358 testy. "quarrelsome." 361. wrong: "insult"

364. death-counterfeiting. "that mimics death."

367. virtuous property. "beneficent quality."

368. his: "its," referring to the herb.

372 wend "go," the original present of *went*.

373 with league, etc: joined in a league whose duration shall last till death.

379. night's swift dragons: Night, Morning (Aurora), and the Sun all had chariots, which chased each other across the sky. As Morning approached, the Night "rode down the sky" towards the west. Cars drawn by dragons, i.e. winged serpents, were used by Ceres and the enchantress Medea. Shakespeare bestows a dragon car on Night, probably because of the fantastic shapes of the night clouds. In Antony and Cleopatra "a dragonish cloud" is called one of "black Vesper's pageants."

380. Aurora's harbinger the Morning Star. A harbinger was a quartermaster sent in advance of an army to secure quarters. Kindred words are *harbour*, and Fr. *auberge*, It. *albergo*, "an inn." The original word *herberge* meant "army shelter," from *here* and *ber gen*.

382. *damned spirits*: spirits which were condemned to wander because they had had no regular burial. The bodies of suicides, if found, were buried at cross roads with a stake, sometimes the finger post, stuck through them. Those who drowned themselves in rivers probably remained where they were

389. *the morning's love*: probably a reference to the hunter Cephalus who was beloved of Aurora. He is referred to again in V. i. 196, q. v. Hunters proverbially were early risers, and so it might be said that Aurora loved them. Some editors, however, take Oberon to mean that he could sport with Aurora, *i.e.* haunt the woods in the early morning. Cp. Milton, *Allegro*, "Zephyr with Aurora playing"

402. *drawn*: "with drawn sword."

404. *plainer*: "more level."

412 *try . . . manhood*: *i.e.* "fight."

417. *that*: "so that"

421. *ho, ho, ho*: the traditional cry of Robin Goodfellow

426. *buy this dear*. "pay dearly for this."

430. *by day's approach*, etc.: addressed to Lysander, "When day comes, I will be with you."

436. *steal*: subjunctive expressing a wish.

461. *Jack shall have Jill*: a proverbial expression for the happy ending of a tale or play, in which lovers are duly married.

463. *the man shall have his mare*: the proverb was "All is well, and the man hath his mare again." The loss or death of a mare is a favourite theme of country songs and ballads.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The first scene of the fourth act is the awakening or loosing of the charm. Titania and Bottom are added to the four who sleep already on the ground. Then the six sleepers waken as if from a dream. Titania first, whose reconciliation with Oberon is the exit for the fairies; then the lovers, who are roused by Theseus' horns; and finally Bottom, whose sleep seems to have been proof against most noises. The reappearance of Theseus in the fourth act is characteristic of Shakespeare's method—his fourth acts almost always contain reference to the first; and here Theseus, manly and practical, brings us effectively back to the world of reality, and replaces Titania, whose character and surroundings create the atmosphere of fairy-land.

2. *amiable*: "lovely." *coy* "caress."

15. *overflowed*: "drowned."

18. *neaf*: fist.

19. *leave your courtesy*: *i.e.* "put on your hat," or possibly "leave off bowing and scraping." Titania had told the fairies to

nod to Bottom and do him courtesies, and a good deal of amusement could have been had from the business.

21. **Cavalery Cobweb** : *Cavalero* was a form of the Spanish *caballero* (Fr *chevalier*) introduced into England in Elizabeth's reign. Cobweb had been sent off to shoot a humble-bee, so that Bottom seems to have forgotten which of the fairies was which.

26. **I have a reasonable good ear**, etc. weavers were famous for psalm-singing, many of them being Huguenots and Flemish Protestant refugees.

27. **the tongs and the bones** : kitchen-music. The tongs were struck with a key, and the bones rattled between the fingers.

30. **bottle** . a diminutive of *bott*, a bundle of hay. It has nothing to do etymologically with *bottle*, meaning a flask.

31. **hath no fellow** . "is unrivalled."

36. **exposition** for *disposition*

38. **be all ways away** . "depart in all directions"

39. **the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle**, etc. a great deal has been written about this passage, because the sense demands that there be two plants, one to represent Titania and one Bottom, and Shakespeare elsewhere calls the honeysuckle "woodbine." Outside Shakespeare "woodbine" was used for almost any climbing plant, especially the bindweed or climbing convolvulus. The white bindweed twining with the honeysuckle is what might be seen in any hedgerow. Ben Jonson has "How the blue bindweed doth itself unfold with honeysuckle." It is probably the lesser of the two evils to assume that Shakespeare used "woodbine" for "bindweed," for if woodbine and honeysuckle are to be one plant, and join the ivy in twisting about the elm, the balance of the passage is spoilt.

40. **female ivy** : so called because it required the support of a stronger tree.

46. **favours** : "love-tokens."

51. **orient** : lit. "coming from the East" The word lost its original sense and came to mean simply "bright."

63. **other** . "others", the plural is frequently found without the *s* in Elizabethan English. The A S plural was *othre*.

64. **may all** . "all may."

70. **Dian's bud** : probably the *Agnus Castus*, which was supposed to enable those who eat it to preserve their chastity. In a poem which was written either by Chaucer or in his time Diana is represented as carrying a branch of *Agnus Castus*.

78. **and strike more dead**, etc. . "and deaden the senses of all these five more than common sleep could."

80. **charmeth** : "produces by enchantment."

81. **now, when thou wak'st**, etc. Puck removes the mask which had served for Bottom's asshead, performing the operation on the stage. On Bottom's first appearance with it, it is called in the old texts "the Asshead," i.e. the property asshead belonging to the Globe Theatre.

84. **new in amity** . "friends once more."

92. *sad* : "grave," "sober," not "unhappy" or "mournful"
93. *trip we after*, etc. : the fairies followed night as it passed round the globe, and therefore travelled swifter than the moon
100. *forester* : "hunter"
101. *observation* : cp. I. i. 167. Theseus and Hippolyta had risen early to observe May morning.
102. *since we have the vaward*, etc. : "since we are in the vanguard of the day," i.e. "since it is still early."
109. *Cadmus* : the first king of Thebes, who was supposed to have introduced the alphabet into Greece.
111. *hounds of Sparta* : Sparta was famous for its dogs, which are referred to in Ovid and elsewhere. The name of Sparta was associated with endurance, so that Lodovico in *Othello*, referring to the manner in which the bloodhound Iago had hunted Othello to death, calls him a "Spartan dog"
112. *chiding* : used of any noise.
114. *mutual* : i.e. the groves gave back the sound which came to them from the barking of the dogs.
117. *so flew'd, so sanded* : "like them with hanging chaps and sand-coloured" The dogs are bloodhounds.
119. *dew-lapp'd* : "with loose skin on the neck."
120. *match'd in mouth like bells*, etc. : it was most important to select dogs so that their mouths or barks were in harmony, each part below the other. It was usual to have a male three-part chorus—counter-tenor (alto), tenor, and bass. Sir Roger de Coverley, according to Addison, was so particular that, on receiving a present of a dog, he returned it because it was a bass and he required a counter-tenor.
121. *cry* : "pack." 124. *soft* : "stop."
128. *of* : "at." 131. *in grace of* : "in honour of."
136. *Saint Valentine is past*. Saint Valentine's day, on which birds select their mates, is the 14th of February, and this was the 1st of May.
141. *jealousy* : "suspicion."
142. *to sleep* : "as to sleep."
144. *half sleep, half waking* the termination *-ing* of "waking" has to serve for both words.
149. *where we might* . . . —: he was about to say "marry" when Egeus interrupted him.
154. *defeated* : "defrauded"; the word often means "spoil," "undo."
157. *stealth* : "stealing away"
160. *in fancy* : "from love." 161. *wot* : "know."
170. *but, like in sickness*, etc. : something is probably wrong in the text. *In* is an emendation for *a*, but not much of an improvement, and the double *but* here and in l. 171 is ugly; *now* in place of the second *but* would be slightly better.
186. *with parted eye* : i.e. with the two eyes not focussed on the same point

187 methinks. "it seems to me"

188. like a jewel · a jewel is so precious a thing that, when you find it, it is difficult to feel that you are the owner.

189. it seems to me : before these words the Quartos read, "Are you sure that we are awake?" The words do not improve the sense, and spoil the metre. They were probably purposely omitted from the Folio

202 go about : "set about," "endeavour"

204 patched fool. "a jester in motley," *i.e.* in a parti-coloured suit

205 offer · "attempt." the eye of man, etc. · it is difficult not to suppose that this is a parody of Scripture (1 Corinthians ii. 9).

212 her death. *i.e.* "Thisbe's death." Theobald conjectured "after death," which is certainly better sense, and ends the scene with more point.

ACT IV SCENE II

Bottom's reappearance, and the revival of the interlude, serve to fill the time between Theseus' return from the wood and the evening. Whatever may be said about the time sequence of the dream, we know exactly what happened from sunrise to sunset on Theseus' wedding day. He rose early to observe May morning, and prepared to hunt after the rites were over ; he then found the lovers, and returned with them to Athens. He was married presumably before two o'clock, and spent the afternoon over his dinner or wedding breakfast, and was ready for the play after his dessert, and for the fairy blessing when he retired to rest.

4. out of doubt he is transported : "without doubt he has been carried off by the fairies."

5 it goes not forward : "it cannot come off."

8. discharge : "perform."

14. thing of naught · "a worthless thing."

17. we had all been made men : "all our fortunes would have been made."

18. sixpence a day : Steevens supposes that this may be a reference to some actor who, like Preston, the author of *Cambyases*, received a pension from the Queen for his acting.

22 in Pyramus : "in the part of Pyramus."

23 hearts : "good fellows"; nautical and colloquial.

26. I am to discourse wonders : "I have wonders to relate."

32 strings : to tie on the beards.

34. preferred : "offered," *i.e.* handed in to Philostrate for acceptance. But that meant to Bottom accepted for performance.

ACT V SCENE I.

With the fourth act the two chief complications end, and the fifth merely adds a parody of the main theme and a marriage ode for the faeries. Such parodies were regular parts of masques, and were called *antimasques*. In the comic epilogue of the Latin play at Westminster there is probably a survival of the custom. The epithalamium indicates that the play was written not for the theatre, but to be acted in a private house as a masque, on the occasion of a wedding; and this is borne out by the whole character of the play and the scenic arrangements, which are simple even for Shakespeare.

It has been suggested that Theseus' speech at the opening was a later addition, and it certainly shows evidences of Shakespeare's later manner.

The two main divisions of this scene are admirably contrasted, and the transition from one to the other is managed with skill (l. 353). The marriage song dismisses the faeries who have come to sing it, and also the lovers whose happy future is now assured, and so concludes the whole story. Without it the last word would be left to the clowns, and Bottom is not, like Peste in *Twelfth Night*, capable of closing a comedy. Puck, the spirit of Comedy and jester to the fairy king, is the person to perform that office.

1. *that* · "what" 2. *may* · "can."

3. *antique* : the word can mean either "old" or "odd"; probably the latter is the meaning here

5. *shaping fantasies* : "imagination that create forms." *apprehend* : "grasp at."

6. *comprehends* : "fully understands."

8. *all compact* : "entirely made up."

10. *all* : "quite"

11. *Helen's beauty* Helen, the most beautiful woman in Greece, for whose sake the Trojan War was fought, served as the type of perfect beauty from the days of Homer to those of Goethe. *brow of Egypt* : "the face of a gypsy." *Gipsy* is a corrupt form of *Egyptian*.

14. *and as imagination, etc* : the poet carries the illusion one stage further than its imaginative creator, for he romances about it as if it were real.

19. *apprehend* : the word has the same sense as above, but *comprehends* must either mean "fully accepts the existence of" or "apprehends along with."

21. *fear* · "object of fear."

22 *how easy is a bush, etc* : the irregularity in grammar is natural in spoken English. This famous speech has three aspects — (1) It is part of the dialogue. Theseus will not believe the lovers' story, "for after all they are lovers, and, like poets and madmen, the victims of their own imaginations. Imagination stirred by joy or fear has produced the whole illusion." (2) It is characteristic of Theseus — see Introduction, p. xix. (3) It contains incidentally, almost ironically, the famous statement of the creative power of

poetic imagination Shakespeare frequently puts the noblest and justest sentiments into the mouths of the characters whose actions or principles are least in harmony with what they say; thus it is Iago, the slanderer, who says, "He who filches from me my good name, Robs me of that which not enriches him, And leaves me poor indeed"; and Polonius, the tedious old fool, who tells us that "Brevity is the soul of wit."

23 but all the story, etc. "but the whole account of their adventures during the night, and the fact that the feelings of all alike were affected, shows that there was something more than mere images of fancy; the story indeed proves consistent enough, strange and wonderful as it is."

34. after-supper: "dessert," called also "mere supper"

39. abridgment. "means of shortening"

41. lazy i.e. "passing slowly," or perhaps "during which we have nothing to do." The latter would be more characteristic

42. brief. "list" ripe: "ready"

44. The battle with the Centaurs, etc. the Folios make Lysander read the list, while Theseus gives the comments. As such an arrangement is more effective on the stage, and the Folios show evidence of having been corrected by means of an acting copy, the change was probably made after the Quarto was published. The Centaurs were fabulous creatures, half man, half horse, who probably represented the uncivilised tribes of Thessaly

47 in glory of my kinsman Hercules the battle with the Centaurs was fought by the Lapithæ, a people of Thessaly, whose king Pirithous was aided by Theseus. Ovid makes Nestor, who relates the story in the *Metamorphoses*, purposely omit all mention of Hercules; so Theseus, who had apparently first-hand experience, in telling the story to Hippolyta repaired the omission. Hercules, while chasing the Erymanthian boar, fought with Centaurs at the cave of one of them called Pholus; but it is less likely that Shakespeare had read of this combat, which does not like the other occur in the *Metamorphoses*. Plutarch makes Hercules and Theseus kinsmen on the mother's side

48. the riot of the tipsy Bacchanals. Orpheus, the Thracian singer, was torn in pieces by women infuriated by Bacchus; cp. *Lyctilus*—

"What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?"

51. when I from Thebes, etc. Chaucer, in the *Knight's Tale*, says that Theseus conquered Thebes and returned to Athens in triumph.

52. the thrice three Muses, etc. see Introduction, p. xii.

59 wondrous strange snow: the context seems to demand an epithet which shall be as contradictory to snow as *hot* is to *ice*. Several, e.g. "scorching," "swarthy," have been suggested.

70. passion: "emotion"

74. unbreath'd. "untrained." 79. intents. "endeavours"

80. stretch'd: "strained"; by a slight colloquial looseness *conn'd*, i.e. "learnt by rote," is attributed to the "endeavours" rather to the result of the endeavours, i.e. the play. For the language cp. *Lear*, "twenty silly ducking observants that *stretch* their *duties* nicely."

85. I love not, etc.: Hippolyta answers Theseus' last words to her (ll. 82, 83), characteristically substituting "wretchedness" for "simpleness," i.e. "I do not care to see poor capacity attempting more than it can perform, and loyalty defeating itself in its endeavour to please."

88 kind: i.e. "acting." Theseus picks up the word in another sense.

91. what poor duty, etc.: "where loyalty fails to achieve success, noble courtesy thanks the performers for what they have been able to do, and does not consider the merits of the performance." But as the metre is irregular there may be corruption.

93. clerks: "scholars."

94. premeditated: "practised beforehand." Shelley calls the lark's song "unpremeditated art," and Milton speaks of "meditating the thankless muse."

96. periods: "full stops." Theseus' words prepare the way for Quince, who in rendering the prologue which he has written puts full stops in the middle of his sentences owing to his nervousness.

97. throttle their practis'd accent: mumble their skilled elocution in their throats

101. fearful: active, "timid."

105. to my capacity. "as far as I am capable of judging."

106. Prologue: the prologue offered an apology for the play, and served to introduce the characters and explain the situation. For the latter purpose it was first used by Euripides, and the tradition descended to the Elizabethan stage through Seneca. Shakespeare uses a prologue on the classical model in *Richard III.*, and both to apologise and explain in *Henry V.* Dramatically a play should explain itself and need no prologue, and Shakespeare therefore seldom employs one address'd: "ready."

108. If we offend, etc.: the correct punctuation of the prologue is—

"If we offend, it is with our good will

That you should think we came not to offend,

But with good will to show our simple skill;

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider then; we come; but in despite

We do not come. As, minding to content you,

Our true intent is all for your delight,
 We are not here, that you should here repent you.
 The actors are at hand, and by their show
 You shall know all that you are like to know."

113. *mind*ing. "intending."

118 *stand upon points*. the phrase is a *double entente*, as it may mean either "stand upon ceremony" or "mind his stops."

120 *the stop*: a technical term in horsemanship. Lysander puns on the double sense of the word, and possibly on *rid*, "got through," and "ridden."

123 *recorder*: a small flageolet with a mouthpiece. in *government*. Hamlet, when showing Rosencrantz how the instrument is played, uses the same word, "govern these vantages with your finger and thumb."

125 *who is next?*: here the Folios have a stage direction, "Tawyer with a trumpet before them" Mr. Halliwell Phillips discovered the entry of Tawyer's death in the Sexton's book at Southwark Church. He was described as "Mr. Heminge's man," i.e. a servant of Hommings, one of the leading actors in the company, and died in 1623. He apparently walked on before the actors accompanied by a trumpeter. The presence of this stage direction in the text proves that Hommings and Condell had an acting copy before them when they edited the Folio.

136 *did . . . think* no scorn. "did not disdain."

137. *Ninus*: the mythical founder of Nineveh, and husband of Semiramis, who built Babylon where Pyramus and Thisbe lived. *Ninus' tomb*, according to Ovid, was outside the walls of Babylon.

138. *hight*. "was called."

141. *fall*: transitive, the use is not uncommon.

145. *whereat*, with *blade*, etc.: the excessive alliteration is a parody of an affected style in vogue at the time.

147. *mulberry shade*: a mulberry tree with white fruit grew by *Ninus' tomb*, and was reddened by Pyramus' blood.

152 *no wonder*: "probably," i.e. "it will not be surprising if it does."

161. *sinister*. the word is used for the sake of the rhyme, and also for its length. Snout is Bottom's understudy, and his speech is much in Bottom's manner.

180. *sensible*: "possessing feelings."

192. *thy lover's grace*: "thy graceful lover," an affected expression copied from the Greek. It still survives in titles.

193. *Lysander*: i.e. "Leander," who loved Hero, and swam the Hellespont to visit her. Flute substitutes Helen for Hero.

196. *Shafalus*: Cephalus, who was loved by Aurora, but remained true to his wife Procris.

200. *'tide life, 'tide death*: "whether life or death befall."

203. *mural down*: Pope's emendation. The Quartos read, "moon us'd." This, though awkward, gives sense. Theseus, on seeing the Wall go off, remarks that Moonshine must now take up the part of

confidant between the neighbours. Demetrius replies that this is inevitable, because this wall has proved that it has ears by its sudden response either to Pyramus, or to a call from the prompter to tell it to go off, and can no longer be trusted. The Folios read *moral down*, which if it means anything means that moral barriers were now down between the lovers. Possibly a pun between moral and mural was squeezed out of this text. Any word which means no more than "wall" makes the passage exceedingly pointless, and *mural* is not used in Shakespeare elsewhere.

208. *the best in this kind are but shadows* : i.e. "the best plays are but shadows of real life." Hamlet gives the other side of the relation when he says that the function of the stage is to hold a mirror up to nature.

220. *a lion fell. dam* as it stands this must mean "a lion's skin, and otherwise no lioness"; but unless we are to assume that Snug did not know what "lion's dam" meant, or out of mere stupidity got the sexes in lions mixed, the phrase is flat. It is tempting to read *no* for *a*, when the sense will be "neither dreadful lion, nor yet lioness," which is what the context requires.

227. *a goose for his discretion* : i.e. he betrays himself.

239. *the greatest error of all the rest* : an inconsequence of expression found in Milton and Bacon as well as Shakespeare.

243. *in snuff* : "angry." Possibly Starveling was annoyed and forgot his words. He has all through played a feeble part.

260. *moused* : the lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, as a cat might a mouse.

265. *gleams* : this is evidently what Quince wrote, but the texts read "beames," possibly to indicate a blunder of Bottom's who disappoints his hearers of a word which, owing to the rhyme and alliteration, was a certainty.

269. *dole* : "grief."

277. *thrum* : the knotted end of a thread in the weaver's warp. The Fates spun, it was Bottom who wove.

278. *quell* : "kill," A.S. *cwellan*.

279. *this passion, and the death, etc.* : Theseus classes together the two most incongruous feelings he can think of, Pyramus' emotion and the emotion caused by the death of a dear friend.

285. *look'd with cheer* : "looked cheerfully."

286. *confound* : "put to confusion," as in the *Te Deum* and National Anthem.

295. *tongue, lose thy light* : Pyramus' passion concluded with a farewell apostrophe to the sun and moon. The Moon, who had not been at home all along, took the hint and went off, leaving Thisbe in the dark.

298. *no die, but an ace* : Pyramus had, so to speak, thrown five; whereas, being one man, he was only entitled to an "ace," as he could only die once.

302. *prove an ass* : an allusion to Bottom's translation, and a pun on "ace" and "ass," which were pronounced alike.

303. **chance** : see I. i. 120

310. **warrant** : "defend," "preserve."

314 **means** : an old form of "means." The incorrigible Demetrius uses the word in both the ancient and the modern sense, translating the latter by *vide licet*.

321. **lips** : possibly the original was "brows," for he should have rhymed. However, a note will not turn the balance between Quince as a poet and Bottom as his interpreter.

335 **imbrue** lit. "stain with blood," here misused for "stab," and similarly misused by Pistol, who calls fighting "imbruing." It was evidently a highflown tragic word. We know from a reference to the play dating from 1607 that Thisbe killed herself with the scabbard of Pyramus' sword. Ovid makes careful arrangements that Thisbe should find the sword ready, but Bottom probably forgot everything but his own death. It is always a difficult situation for the amateur actor when the required property is not forthcoming at the moment of action. Thisbe, according to the Prologue, was to draw Pyramus' dagger, but whether out of him or out of the scabbard is not stated.

343. **Bergomask** : the inhabitants of Bergamo, N E. of Milan, were famous clowns. *Zany* is derived from Zanni, a Bergomese abbreviation of Giovanni, the Italian for "John."

355 **overwatch'd** : "kept too long awake."

356. **palpable-gross** : i.e. "the roughness of which was palpable."

357. **gait** : "going," i.e. "passing"; in l. 403 it means "way," as in Scotch.

363. **fordone** : "tired."

368. **time of night** : midnight, "when graveyards yawn and Hell itself breathes forth contagion to the world."

373 **triple Hecate** : the goddess who was Hecate in the Lower World was Diana on earth and Luna in heaven.

376. **frolic** : "merry," (Germ. *fröhlich*).

379. **to sweep the dust, etc.** : Puck does not seem to have been a model of domestic cleanliness. The Elizabethans were to seek in such matters as opening windows and scrubbing; even in great houses rooms were allowed to go musty.

385. **dance it** : a common use of *it* as object without a reference. Cp. "Foot it feally here and there" in the *Tempest*, and Milton's "Come and trip it as you go, On the light fantastic toe."

399. **prodigious** : "portentous," "of evil omen."

402. **field-dew consecrate** : consecrated field-dew was the fairies' holy water.

411. **this** : viz. "that you have slumbered."

415. **no more yielding** : "producing nothing."

420. **serpent's tongue** : "hissing."

424. **give me your hands** : i.e. "clap." Hands are joined for three purposes : (1) to clap, (2) to express friendship, (3) to say good-bye.

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